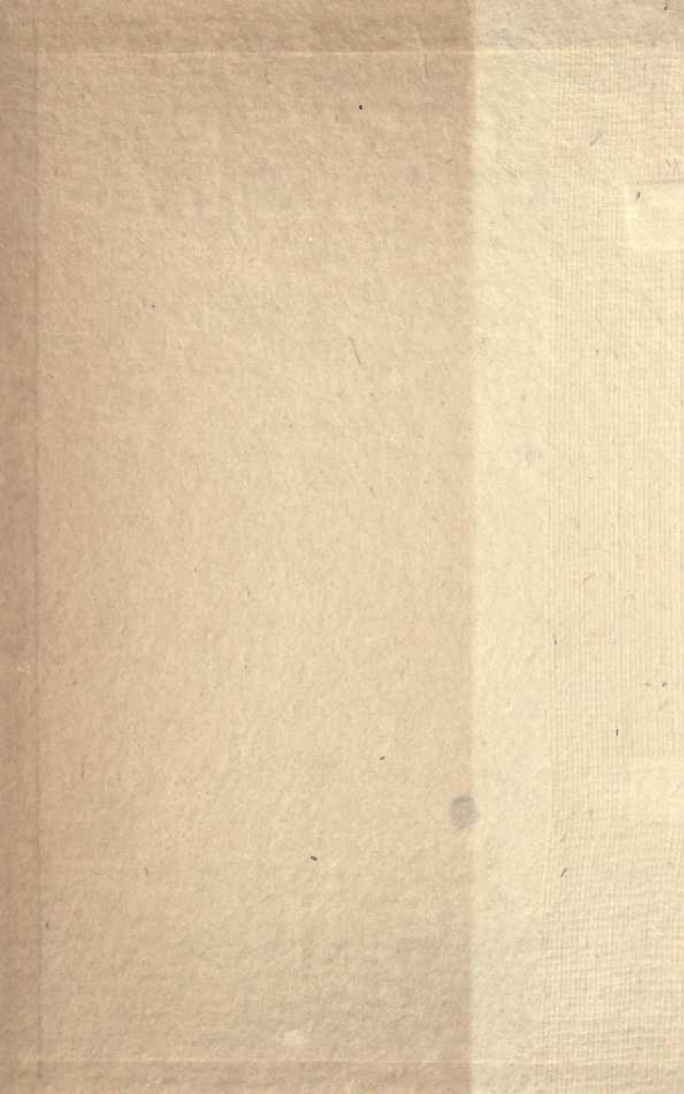


STUDIES IN  
CHRISTIANITY

A. CLUTTON-BROCK



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STUDIES IN CHRISTIANITY

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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# STUDIES IN CHRISTIANITY

BY

A. CLUTTON-BROCK

AUTHOR OF THE ULTIMATE BELIEF

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## INTRODUCTION

I AM often told by my friends that Christianity is nothing but a set of statements about supernatural history which no one now can honestly believe. When I deny this, they ask me what Christianity is ; and, if I try to tell them, they reply—That is not Christianity at all but certain beliefs which were held by men before Christ was born and may be held by them after his name has been forgotten. But, all the while, I am convinced that there is a body of belief, not concerned with supernatural history, which is Christian ; that it began with the teaching of Christ, as Platonism began with the teaching of Plato, that it has been enlarged and enriched with the experience of nineteen centuries and yet has remained itself. I am not anxious to prove the originality of Christ in detail. It may be that he said no single thing which had not been said before him. -The originality of a great teacher consists, not in particular sayings or doings, but (in his power of giving life to an idea) so that it continues to live in other men's minds and is enriched with other men's thought. The greatest ideas are not those which remain peculiar to their authors. Rather they are those which take on an independent life of

their own, changing and growing yet remaining always themselves, like a living thing. So, I believe, Christianity has changed and grown and remained itself; and in this book I have tried to state what it is to us now.

At all times it has been adulterated with beliefs irrelevant or incongruous. (Every age has its own peculiar heresies which seem to it part of the Christian faith; for that faith, being expressed always by the mind of man, is always tainted by man's imperfections.) But these pass and change, while the faith itself remains. And yet the faith itself also changes in its expression, because in different ages it is confronted with different counter-beliefs; and it always expresses itself in terms of the prevailing counter-beliefs. But, again, they pass and change, while Christianity remains. For, although it is expressed by the minds of men, yet, for those who believe it, it is a truth independent of those minds, a truth which they recognise and to which they make answer. So our very expressions of it are rather answers to this truth than the truth itself; and those who are most convinced of this truth know best that their own statements of it are not the truth itself. Was not Christ aware of a truth independent of his own mind, to which he made his own passionate answer? To him that truth was not his own word but the word of God. We cannot understand his teaching unless we see it as the answer which he made to the word of God, as



something to which he was moved by the truth of God, as a musician is moved to music by the beauty of the universe. So we are moved by the words of Christ as we are by music ; and at one time we see one truth in them, at another another. But through all generations men are moved by them and discover new truths in them ; it seems to them that his words have never been understood before. So to us now it seems that we understand them in the light of all our new knowledge and experience ; and, even while we are told that Christianity is dead, we see it rising from the grave, as men have always seen it when they were not content to accept it on hearsay. Perhaps every age needs to reject the Christianity of the past so that it may discover Christianity for itself. Only through disbelief in what we are told do we attain to belief in that truth which remains independent of all man's expression of it.

And yet all the past efforts to express it are not vain ; for we can recognise the truth in them as in the words of Christ himself. And they are connected with each other by the truth that is in them. That truth is the Christian tradition : it is what persists from generation to generation, while that which is false becomes obsolete. There is, in all the struggle for life of conflicting beliefs, a survival of the true ; and the true is tested by that struggle. But we need to be aware that the true does not necessarily survive in our individual minds. Even when we are most sure of it, we need to be aware that

we ourselves are very imperfect mediums of expression for it. And the more surely we know that it is a truth independent of ourselves, the more we shall be aware of that fact. The truth is not something made by man but something that knocks at the mind of man ; and his mind may open to it or be closed against it. But when it enters his mind, he can express it to himself or to others only through his mind. The knocking is that which arouses in him the desire for expression, the desire to make the truth his own. The truth itself is perfect ; but his mind and the language in which alone he can express it are imperfect. So the more urgently it knocks, the more he is aware of its glory and perfection, the greater is his sense of his own failure to express it. Even as he makes it his own by expression, he knows that he has not made it all his own ; that there is that in him which misrepresents whatever it tries to express, an egotism which turns the universal into the particular, and provokes the egotism of other men against it. Only those at whose minds truth has never knocked, or who have never recognised the knocking, suppose that they can express the truth perfectly, or that any past expression of it is perfect.

So the truth knocks still at our minds ; but in many different ways. It may seem to come suddenly out of our own experience of life ; or it may seem to come in the words of some great man of the past. But, even when it does that, those words are

not enough for us. Because the truth is knocking at our minds in them, we feel the need to make it our own, to give it our own expression. And we know that, until we have done that, we have not received it into our minds. So there is, and can be, no end to the expressions of Christianity ; so long as it is a truth knocking at the minds of men, they will continue to express it for themselves ; and in this unceasing effort at expression the Christian tradition lives from one generation to another.

The effort which I have made in this book does not pretend to be complete. I meant it to be so when I began it ; but I soon found that the task was beyond my powers. I was not able to express even all that Christianity means to me ; and, if I had tried to do so, I should never have finished the book. I had meant, for instance, to write a chapter on Christianity and politics ; but in writing it I found that it was growing longer than the rest of the book. I therefore put it aside ; but without it the book is not complete, as any reader can see for himself. So I have called it *Studies in Christianity* ; but I have tried to maintain a continuity of thought through it, and to produce not merely a set of separate essays. I have also tried to say as little as possible about those points of belief on which I differ from many other Christians, points so important that some of them, perhaps, would refuse to call me a Christian at all. My object has been to state what is positive in my own beliefs, not what is negative. It is

necessary, I think, to rid Christianity of beliefs that can no longer be held ; but, before we do that, we must state as clearly as possible what we believe to be the eternal essence of it. And we must be aware that what seems incredible to us may seem so only because we misexpress it to ourselves. All through the ages men, individually and in common, have tried to express Christianity ; and, if we know that they have never quite succeeded, we shall be less impatient of each other's attempts at expression, even when they are unintelligible to us. It is when men pretend that their own expressions are perfect, that other men are provoked to call them false ; and that is so whether the expression is that of an individual or of a church.

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*Good* *True*  
*life*





# STUDIES IN CHRISTIANITY

## CHAPTER I

### CHRISTIANITY AND ABSOLUTE VALUES

THE nature of religion, like that of man himself, consists in what it is trying to become. Like man, religion tries to free itself more and more from the tyranny of its own past, to grow more and more aware of its own nature, to purge itself of what is foreign to that nature, and to gain in the power of expression by discovering what it has to express. But, for this reason, it is hard to define ; and men still dispute what it is. Some would define it in terms of its origins and discredit it with their definition. So we might define, and discredit, science by talking of the alchemist or the medicine man. There is magic in the past both of science and of religion, but both outgrow magic as they free themselves of the egotism of the individual, as they discover that they are not themselves until they are freed from it. The virtue of both consists in freedom from egotism and at that the man of science and the religious man continually aim. They know that egotism is always producing error in science and in religion ; but they are on their guard against it, and it is a function of both to set men on their guard against it.

But they are on their guard against it for different reasons. The man of science, because it hinders him from discovering the truth ; for it tempts him to believe what he wishes to believe, as, for instance, that he has discovered the truth before he has discovered it. The religious man, because it perverts his conduct, and through his conduct, his thought. For religion asserts a constant interaction between conduct and thought, that interaction which is asserted in the Christian doctrine of faith and works. Indeed religion is an effort to produce a complete harmony in conduct and thought ; and we may describe it imperfectly as the effort to express all that is implied in a right way of living. Men, in all reasoned conduct, necessarily imply certain convictions about the nature of the universe, convictions about matters that are beyond their own knowledge and experience. (They may live rightly and imply these convictions without ever trying to express them, without even being aware of them.) They may even consciously refuse the attempt to express them, as being impossible and sure to lead them into error. But religion makes the attempt and, in making it, assumes that the convictions implied in right living can be expressed ; and that, if rightly expressed, they are true, even about matters beyond the knowledge and experience of man.

It also makes this assumption about right living ; that what is right is not to be discovered by observation and experiment alone, but that men have a

power of recognising it, and a desire for it, as natural as their appetites ; and that this power and desire grow in proportion as they live rightly. So, to religion, this power of recognition and this desire are the most important of all facts. They are the facts upon which man should base his beliefs about the nature of the universe. Through them, and through them alone, is there a connection between the known and the unknown. For they are themselves a connection between man himself and the unknown ; by means of them he does experience the unknown even while it remains unknown to him. ' It is the way of Heaven not to speak but it knows how to obtain an answer.' That saying of Lao-tze is the basis of all true religion ; and religion only becomes itself when its aim is to make that answer.

Heaven does not speak to us ; it does not tell us about itself, for if it did man could not understand it. If an angel came down from Heaven to reveal the nature of the universe to me, he could use only that language which men have developed for and with their own thoughts, a language capable only of the thoughts of men. And there are thoughts, even of men, which I cannot fully understand, though they have expressed them in human language. I know, from the difference between myself and Plato, how infinite is the capacity of thought and how, in Plato himself, it struggles with the medium of language. Always the poets and philosophers are enlarging that medium, because they, as individuals, think

beyond the capacity of the common medium of language. But Heaven, if there is a Heaven that would reveal its secret to us, must use the medium of our language and of our intelligence. Whatever it says to us, we must say to ourselves, and in our own words. Therefore it is true that Heaven does not speak to us in a heavenly language of its own. It speaks to us only through the medium of ourselves, and in the answer we make to it.

What is this answer ? It is our absolute values ; and we may say of religion that it is the affirmation of absolute values. But this phrase 'absolute values' needs explanation, for there are those who say that it is meaningless.

The word value cannot be defined, for it is a fact of the human mind like thought or desire. What I value in the present I desire to persist. If I value life, I desire to go on living. But religion asserts, and Christianity more consciously than most religions asserts, that two kinds of values are possible to man ; namely the value for life itself, and so the mere desire to go on living ; and that other kind of value which is called absolute value. This absolute value is the answer which man makes to Heaven and the manner in which Heaven expresses itself to man.

If a man values life itself above all things and above all things desires to go on living, he will value all things as they help him to go on living. They will, in a useful phrase, have for him only a survival value ; that is to say he will see them only in relation

to his own survival. Now there are those who maintain that man is of such a nature that he must value life above all things, and that everything has for him only a survival value. Sometimes they assert that he is capable of valuing the survival of the human race above his own individual survival. They assume the existence of some power, which they often call Nature, more interested in the survival of the race than of the individual, a power which exists apart from the individual yet works in him. This power struggles, sometimes with success sometimes with failure, to make the individual man value the survival of the race above his own survival. This is the struggle we call moral conflict in ourselves. It produces in us the sense of higher and lower values, the higher being those which make for the survival of the race, the lower those which make for the survival of the individual. But it is Nature who, for purposes of her own, makes us call one set of values higher and the other lower, makes us value one set above the other. And in either case our values remain survival values. It is life itself that we value, whether for ourselves or for the race, and we value all things in terms of life.

This is a dogmatic assertion ; and religion denies it dogmatically, the more dogmatically the more it becomes religion. There are those who assert the existence only of survival values and yet rise into religion, illogically enough, by proclaiming the



absolute value of Nature. They tell us that, although we can value nothing but life itself for the individual or for the race, yet we are also to value the universe in which only these values are possible. We are to affirm that this force, which makes us value life above all things, is itself good ; that is to say, it is to be valued above life itself, it is what makes life valuable. That is a religion, but an illogical one, a religion trying to escape from its own irreligious affirmations. For religion is, in its essence, the effort to escape from the valuing of life for its own sake and from living for the sake of living. Nor can it be content with living for the sake of the life of the race ; for, if his own life is not to be valued by the individual above all things, why should he sacrifice himself, as an individual, to give that which he does not value for himself to an abstraction called the race ? The race consists of individuals ; and in sacrificing himself, he asserts some value above the value for life. There is something which he himself values more than his life. His desire must be that the race, that is to say other men, should have this something, not that they should have merely life itself, which has no values without this something.

It may be, of course, that man, in his belief that he values something above life itself, is merely deceived by Nature for her own purpose, which is the survival of the race. But, in that case, he cannot value the Nature that so deceives him. As soon as he finds



her out, which he can do by the exercise of his own reason, he will cease to value her, or life, either for himself or for the race. Therefore she must be against his exercise of his reason, at least beyond a certain point ; and man's reason must be dangerous to the existence of man. The further it is exercised, the more it will empty life of values for him, unless he can reconcile himself to the valuing of his own individual life for its own sake.

In that case he will be rid of religion and of morality altogether, even of that religion which affirms that Nature is good, or of that morality which makes for the persistence of the race. He will be merely an individual concerned for his own survival as an individual. Enlightened self-interest will be the basis of his society, if self-interest, become thus conscious and supreme, can bring him any enlightenment.

But religion asserts that it cannot. All religion asserts that, even the religion of Nature ; and in doing so it affirms, whether consciously or unconsciously, the existence of absolute values in the mind of man. Man, it says, does not, cannot, live only so that he may go on living. He does desire to go on living ; he has an instinct of self-preservation. But that is only a part, not the whole, of his mind, nor are the values produced in him by it all his values. Besides them, and often in conflict with them, he has other values, those which are called absolute because in them he forgets his desire to go

on living, forgets himself altogether, and values things for their own sake, not as they help him to go on living. It is said sometimes that we cannot value anything thus absolutely ; we must value it in relation to ourselves, as, for instance, because it gives us pleasure. But we do not value beauty because it gives us pleasure. It gives us pleasure because we value it. Without the absolute value for beauty we cannot be aware of it. The pleasure comes when we are aware of it and is therefore the effect, not the cause, of the absolute value. The belief in absolute values implies, not merely that we are capable of valuing things absolutely, but also that there is in things, in the universe, an absolute value, a virtue not dependent on the use which any one thing may have for another. It is possible to see the universe merely in terms of use, to see God Himself in those terms. Many people think that they can explain all things in terms of use. They explain beauty, for instance, as the expression of something useful to man, as the manner in which use presents itself to man's emotions ; when he takes pleasure in the contemplation of use he calls it beauty. So beauty has no real existence ; it is not a quality or a virtue of the thing itself but exists for us because the thing is useful to us. If it ceased to be useful, it would cease to be beautiful. And so there are devout people for whom God Himself is good because He is useful. They are always expressing His goodness in terms of use ; they cannot

conceive it otherwise, because they cannot conceive any relation between any one person or thing and another except one of use. There is a sort of commerce between all existing things which alone gives them their value and apart from it they have no virtue in themselves. They are like the parts of a machine which, if they were separated, would have no function ; or they are like food which, considered as food, is of no value except to those who wish to eat it.

But it is part of belief in God to affirm the absolute value of God. God is good, we say—the two words mean the same thing—God is good in Himself and apart from His use to us or to anything else. If we believe in God we believe in absolute good, we affirm it in the very word God ; and the love of God means the love of absolute good. When we speak of the love of God, we assert that there is a relation between ourselves and God, which is not merely one of use or of emotions produced by use. We see God as good in itself and we love that good. But ‘ no man hath seen God at any time.’ What we have seen is good, and to believe in God is to believe that we have seen absolute good in those things which we do see, the good which we call by the names of truth, beauty, and righteousness. One may believe this without believing in God ; and one may believe in God without believing this. But a passionate and real belief in absolute good usually expresses itself as a belief in God ; and a passionate and real belief in

God usually expresses itself also as a belief in absolute good. In either case there is asserted a relation between ourselves and the universe which is not a relation of use but one of love ; and this relation is also asserted to be more real, more lasting, more valuable, than the relation of use. We need to rise above the relation of use to be aware of it ; but, as soon as we are aware of it, we are aware of its superior reality. We are aware that we live, and fulfil the purpose of our lives, in the relation of love not in the relation of use ; and we have a vision of life that shall be all love and not at all use, that vision which we call Heaven. For love, in the Christian sense of the word, is absolute value. When we say that we love we mean that we value absolutely and not in terms of use. We assert a virtue in that which we love, a virtue that constrains us to love it as soon as we see it ; and, in loving it, to forget ourselves, that is to say the use which it may have for ourselves. Love is self-forgetfulness and the only way in which we can attain to self-forgetfulness ; but we value self-forgetfulness because it is love, not love because it makes us forget ourselves. The Christian doctrine of love is but a more precise and passionate form of the religious affirmation of absolute values. The saying that God is love means that all God's values are absolute and that we are most like God when our values are absolute. In the utterly real existence of God there is no relation of use but only a relation of love ; and our existence



becomes more real as we rise from the relation of use to the relation of love.

It is the religious instinct that makes us value absolute values above other values, because they are absolute. This instinct is not acquired by men but born in them. Religion itself is but the conscious expression of it ; and the effort of religion is to make this expression more and more conscious both in thought and in action. For it asserts a constant interaction between conduct and belief, between faith and works. Absolute values must be expressed in conduct or they are not real ; love is not merely a passive thing, for unless it passes into action it ceases to be love. And since we understand only when we love, we understand only when we love in action. So a knowledge of the nature of the universe can be obtained only by love and that interaction of conduct and belief which love produces. A man may attain to that truth which is commonly called scientific without any interaction between conduct and belief, for he is concerned with truths that do not affect his conduct, or affect it only in less important matters. And this kind of truth is called scientific because it is a matter of knowing, not a matter of doing. But there is a further truth about the nature of the universe, not called scientific because it is not merely a matter of knowing, because it cannot be attained to except by the interaction of conduct and belief, of faith and works. This is religious truth, which is often denied to be truth at

all ; partly because it is hard to express ; partly because it cannot be proved by scientific means, not being a matter of mere knowledge. He who does not act upon it cannot grasp it, however clearly it may be put to him. Only by acting upon it can we understand it ; and this very understanding is itself not merely understanding. Rather it is like the instinct of the craftsman, a matter of practice as well as of thought. Without the practice, the thought cannot be rightly directed.

Hence the difficulty of attaining to religious truth, and the many failures to attain to it. When a scientific truth has once been discovered, it may be expressed in words once for all and so preserved for the pure intellect of man. But a religious truth, even when an individual man has discovered and expressed it, can be fully understood only by those who act on it. So, if the expression of it be preserved as a dogma and not acted upon, it is emptied of meaning for those who so preserve it. Religious dogmas, for those who profess them without acting upon them, fail to mean what they meant to him who first expressed them ; and since few of us act upon the religious dogmas of Christ, we may conjecture that they fail to mean to us what they meant to him, that for us they are often as untrue as the enemies of Christianity assert them to be. To understand them we must act upon them ; for only so will they become religious truth to us, if indeed they are capable of becoming religious truth at all.



Christ incessantly affirms absolute values. He tells us that we have these absolute values and that we can attain to truth, and to eternal life, only by acting upon them. He that would save his life shall lose it. Christ is a religious teacher, not a philosopher, because for him truth can be attained to only by an incessant interaction of conduct and thought; and for him that interaction is the main business of man. (Act rightly so that you may think rightly; think rightly so that you may act rightly.) Truth itself, that word he uses so often, is not to him merely intellectual or scientific truth. It is to be known through the interaction of conduct and thought, and to be understood only by means of that interaction. The knowledge of this truth is knowledge of the scientifically unknown, and therefore a knowledge not scientific, a knowledge, rather, designed to provoke certain conduct through which alone it can be understood. So the very statement of it is designed to make men act, and not merely think, in a certain way. It is like the sayings of a craftsman rather than of a philosopher, of one who speaks to other craftsmen and assumes that only they can understand him.

And, like a craftsman, he makes his appeal first of all to absolute values. The craftsman says—‘There is good work; I will tell you how to do likewise.’ He assumes that his pupils think it good work. If they do not, if they are not moved by the goodness of it, he has nothing to say to them. So Christ assumes

the same values in all men ; and he says that, through acting upon them, men will attain to truth. In them is the voice of God, speaking to us through our own feelings ; and because He speaks to us through our own feelings, because it is our minds that utter His speech, we are His children. But the feelings by themselves are sterile. Our values are not merely emotions but commands. They are not true values unless they are acted upon ; and when God commands us, it is we who command ourselves. God is in us and is one with us, if we obey that command which is His and ours ; if we make in our conduct that answer to Heaven which does not speak except in our values. In the parable of the Prodigal Son the father may be an image of God, but he is also man obeying his values. He is man obeying the voice of God which speaks to him, not by a miracle, but in his own love for his son. And the essence of Christ's teaching, that which makes it religious, is that we are to listen for the voice of God, not in signs and wonders, but in our own hearts. Wherever we are aware of absolute value, of a value that satisfies us utterly and one in which we forget ourselves, there we hear the voice of God. If we act upon that value we shall attain to truth ; and if we act upon that truth we shall attain to further truth, and so to further right action ; and we shall become more and more certain of the voice of God speaking to us through the answer we make to Him. But only by making that answer, which

must be made in conduct, can we be aware of the voice and know that it is the voice of God. If we refuse to make the answer, to act upon our values, they cease to be our values to us; and we come to this—that we value nothing but life itself, a life empty of all value. So by valuing life itself we lose it. ✓

That, put in very general terms, is the teaching of Christ; and it is more religious than any other teaching known to us, because it is more utterly an appeal to absolute values. Absolute values are to Christ the most important fact in the mind of man; they are for him the necessary connection between man's conduct and his thought, and between man himself and his Father which is in Heaven. It is through them and obedience to them that he becomes aware of his Father and of Heaven. Without obedience to them there is no connection between conduct and thought and each goes astray lacking the guidance of the other.

But Christ also tells us what it is we value most absolutely. When he speaks of love he is speaking of absolute value. Love is absolute value; it is the sense of that which is to be valued for its own sake, that sense in which we forget ourselves. And the exquisite delight of love is not the reason why we love but the effect of loving. We cannot love so that we may have that delight, any more than a man can love a woman because he wishes to marry her for her money. We cannot by any effort of will

force ourselves to love ; but we can yield ourselves utterly to love when we experience it. We can value love itself above all other experiences ; we can see absolute value in it. And Christ tells us to do that because love itself is absolute value. He tells us to value our absolute values utterly, to trust them and to believe that by acting upon them we shall attain to truth. All those sayings of his about our Father which is in Heaven are, for us, but prophecies and promises of the truth we shall attain to if we act upon them.

So all theological statements are but attempts to give a scientific expression to that which cannot be scientifically expressed, if they pretend to be more than prophecies and promises of the belief that may be attained to through right living. We cannot know God scientifically, like a natural phenomenon. Nor can we know Him by looking for signs and wonders or by reading tales of past signs and wonders. God speaks to us through ourselves. It is through our own values and obedience to them that we attain to knowledge of Him ; and only so can we tell whether others speak truly of Him. When Christ tells us that God is love, he tells us also that we can know God only through our own love, that, when we love, we are making answer to the God who is love ; and that answer is the only means by which we can become aware of Him. By other means we become aware of an idol of our own making, even though we try to make that idol consistent with a creed. And

✓ these idols, to which the name of God is constantly given, prevent men from recognising God when He speaks within them. They are not aware that He speaks in the answer they make to Him ; they do not even know that it is an answer. And so perhaps this answer, these absolute values, this love of theirs, seem to them to be but an irrelevant luxury of the human mind, a pleasure that it may allow itself after the business of the struggle for life. But Christ affirms that it is business as well as pleasure. Men live only when they love, and should live so that they may love. Love is wisdom as well as passion ; in it alone wisdom and passion are reconciled.

But to the assertion of Christ, and of all true religion, that the nature of the universe is to be understood only through our absolute values, there is opposed, now as always, the belief that the nature of the universe is to be understood by the observation of external reality without regard for man's values. This belief is commonly supposed to be modern and scientific ; yet it has always existed, and the worst cruelties of men have been caused by it.

The enemies of religion maintain that the cruelties of primitive religion, the sacrifice of the firstborn, the car of Juggernaut, are themselves religious. Rather they are scientific, in the sense in which that word is often used. The savage sees that Nature is cruel, is red in tooth and claw. He sees that just as the modern man sees it. The only difference is that he calls Nature God. His conception of God is based,



not on his own values, but on his observation of external reality. In that conception he asserts that truth is to be found through such observation rather than through his own values; that, compared with the surrounding and threatening cruelty of Nature or God, his values are mere illusion. So, in his worship of God, he renounces his own values; he sacrifices them, not only in thought but in deed, even to the sacrifice of his own child. 'I the Lord thy God am a jealous God.' Jealousy was not in itself a virtue to the Jews; but, from their observation of external reality, they believed it to be a quality of God. Therefore they would act contrary to their own values in allaying the jealousy of God and in punishing those who had provoked it. It has been said that:

An honest God's the noblest work of man.

Gods have not been honest because men have feared to express their own values in them. Because they have not dared to believe that God is what they themselves would love, gods have been inferior to the men who worshipped them. It is a common ✓ gibe that man makes God in his own image. If only ✓ he did, there would be less to be said against religion. Man is by nature too much of a snob to make his ✓ God in his own image. He abases himself before that which is lower than himself, as Euripides told the Athenians so often. He dare not believe that God speaks to him in the best of himself. The



divine is to him something utterly alien from himself, something which he expresses in images hideous and bestial, and in practices more hideous and bestial still.

But it is not only primitive man who does this. If we change the word God for the word Nature, we shall see that civilised man does it also, and for the same reason. Our great-grandparents were of the same nature with ourselves, and we cannot call them primitive. A book has lately been written about the industrial revolution, which should be read by every one who believes that science has delivered us once and for all from the cruelties of primitive religion.<sup>1</sup> Read the chapter in that book on the employment of children and you will see that infant sacrifice is not so far back in our past as we think. The sacrifice of children to Moloch was swift and merciful compared with the sacrifice of children in English factories. But, you may say, the motive was not the same. In one case it was superstition, in the other mere greed. Read also the chapter on the Mind of the Rich in the same book, and you will see that superstition is but our name for science that has been discredited. The savage sacrifices his children to his god because, from his observation of external reality, he believes that his god is cruel and demands sacrifice. That is his science, only he does not call it by that name. It is a science that teaches

<sup>1</sup> *The Town Labourer (1760-1832)*, by J. L. Hammond and Barbara Hammond. Longmans, 1917.

him to ignore his own values, to believe that they are contrary to the nature of things, or, as he puts it, to the will of God. Our ancestors called this will of God political economy and believed that science had freed them from superstition. But their political economy made them ignore their own values ; and they sacrificed children to it as the savage sacrificed them to Moloch. They believed that there was in the nature of things a force contrary to their own values and stronger than them. They believed that if they obeyed their own values, this force would make them suffer for their obedience. They did not personify the force and call it Moloch ; but they acted like the savages who did call it Moloch, except that they had no ritual. And it is to be noted that, in their worship of this force, they were as much mistaken as the savages in their worship of Moloch. If they had trusted in their own values rather than in their observation of external reality, they would have discovered that there is no force in the nature of things that compels infant sacrifice ; and England would now be stronger, happier, and wiser than it is. Their political economy seems to us now a mass of insane delusions. To them it was science, just because it taught them not to trust their own values. The lesson for us—and we need to learn it—is that only by trusting our own values can we find the way to wisdom, which is the science of conduct.

We need to learn it still ; for, though the political economy of our ancestors may seem to us absurd, we

do not yet know how it was that they fell into this absurdity. No one has laughed more bitterly at it than Nietzsche. But what is his remedy for all the errors of mankind? Not that we shall trust our values, but that we shall dethrone them for other values. Our values are to him the enemy. His complaint against Christianity, even the Christianity of Christ, and against all the philosophies of the past, is that they have seen the universe in the light of man's values rather than man's values in the light of the universe. He believed that he had attained to a new and true philosophy by rejecting man's values; that they were the mist with which man hid himself from the truth. If man could rid himself of them, he would see things as they are, and so would be able to attain to other and true values; would be able to exult in reality itself and not in his own perversion of it.

But Nietzsche, also, was mistaken when he thought his creed a new one. If he had all old philosophies against him, he had all primitive religion on his side. That new rapture with which he tried to accept the values taught by Nature was the old frenzy with which men have thrown themselves beneath the car of Juggernaut or sacrificed their children to Moloch. In his hymns to strength, to ruthlessness, we hear again the voice of primitive man glorifying his omnipotent idol, that voice which sounds so incongruously in some of the hymns and prayers of our own churches. Nietzsche is most archaistic when he

seems to himself most modern ; his light is but the darkness from which, through so many ages, man has struggled to escape.

Further, in his effort to escape from the assumption of other philosophers, he makes an immense assumption of his own about the nature of man's values ; that those values are themselves the result of our observation of external reality, are wrong conclusions drawn from that observation. They are, in fact, our comment upon the sum of things, a comment so habitual that it has become unconscious. But he believes that we can summon up these values of ours into consciousness again ; that we can see them as a mere comment upon the sum of things ; that we can test them by new and more enlightened observation. Doing this, we shall see that they are but theory, and erroneous theory. This theory we shall therefore reject, and so attain to new values ; and for him it is the mark of the superior man thus to see the common values of mankind as mere theory and to reject them. In such rejection is his freedom ; and by it he proves the strength and courage of his mind. For Nietzsche all values are an effect, not a cause, of experience ; except one ultimate value, the value for power, which is absolute and the source of all other values and beliefs.

That is where he differs from Christ, for whom our values are a cause, not an effect, of our experience ; for whom they are not theory but the answer made



by man to God. It is the incompatibility between man's values and his conduct that produces in him the sense of sin, from which he cannot escape by any attempt to change his values. They are not a comment thrown up by his mind but an acting part of it. Comment is their action ; and if man is to get rid of them, he must get rid of his mind altogether. They are above reason, which is their servant and without them would lack all sense of direction.

Now whether this Christian belief be true or not—and it cannot be proved true or untrue—it is certain that all who deny absolute values fall into an inconsistency in their very denial of them. Nietzsche, for instance, denies the existence of absolute values. Man values nothing, he says, except power. He seems to think that our value for power is absolute, in that all our other values are to be explained in terms of it. But it is not absolute in the sense that it makes man forget himself. The will to power is purely egotistical ; the love of power is self-love. Or rather the word love is used here only metaphorically. All love, like everything else, is an expression of the will to power. Man may persuade himself that he loves truth and aims at it ; but all the while it is his will to power that induces him to believe whatever will increase his power. But, while Nietzsche declares that all beliefs are an expression of the will to power, he declaims against the mischievous illusion of our values, as if an illusion must necessarily be mischievous. But why should it be

mischievous, unless truth has an absolute value ? Nietzsche tells us that we have gathered our present values and beliefs about us, including all belief in the absolute, for the sake of comfort. And then he tells us to give them up because they are not true. He tells us in fact that we are to prefer truth to comfort, like any other philosopher ; and he recommends his own doctrine of the will to power, also like any other philosopher, as being true. What recommendation is that, if man has no value for anything but power ? indeed Nietzsche's own theory of the will to power prevents him from recommending it as true. For, according to that theory, all man's beliefs are expressions of his will to power. Man, though he may not know it, really values them only as they give, or seem to give, him power. He pretends to himself that he thinks them true, but only so that he may believe them. Nietzsche does not explain why man, if he values nothing but power, should find it necessary to believe anything at all, why he should Vever have acquired his illusion of the value of truth. But that is by the way. It is enough for my purpose that his theory cuts its own throat. For, if all men's beliefs are but expressions of the will to power, Nietzsche's belief that that is so is also an expression of the will to power. He cannot use it to destroy all other beliefs without causing it also to commit suicide. It is merely a product of his own individual will to power ; and if he can persuade himself to believe it so that he may be more powerful, that is no



reason why any one else should. All our thought is mere anarchy, the product of each individual will to power ; and every theory is cut off from all other theories by the egotism that begot it. Philosophy is but the clamour of competing egotisms, like the barking of hounds for meat. And yet Nietzsche, when he tries to convince us of the truth of his theory, denies this. He appeals from our egotisms, from our competing wills for power, to a universal, uncompetiting, and absolute value for truth. He is himself a philosopher because he sees his own value for truth not as a mere comment on experience but as a cause of experience. Without it he could experience nothing as he does ; he could not think at all.

Into this hopeless inconsistency fall all philosophies which deny absolute values ; for, in denying them, they proclaim the absolute value of truth. That in us which asserts the absolute value of truth speaks truth ; but when it asserts any other absolute value, it lies. Sometimes indeed the absolute value of truth is denied, but even then truth is assumed always to have survival value. It is well that we should know the truth, for it must help us to go on living. But why should we assume this ? If our other values are illusions that we have harboured because they have survival value for us, it is admitted that in some cases a lie, and not the truth, has survival value. In which case we have no right to impute any peculiar survival value to truth ; and we may

believe what is false without any misgiving. There is indeed no reason why we should wish to know the truth about anything. Our only test of a belief should be—has it survival value? But the mind of man will not work so. He cannot persuade himself to believe anything on the ground that it has survival value for him. He cannot believe at all, or even begin to argue about truth, without assuming its absolute value. And what is stranger still, even if he persuades himself that there are no absolute values—that he and the universe are of such a nature that he can live only so that he may go on living—he still finds it impossible to value either himself or a universe of such a nature. His value is for a universe that does not exist, and for a self different from his real self; and, try as he will, he cannot dethrone that value.

So in the past, when men have believed that some monstrous idol was the real God, they have still been unable to value that God and still have wished to believe in a God they could value. And in those who believe in no God there is always a conflict between values and beliefs based on the observation of external reality. Every theory of the nature of the universe, whether religious or no, if it be contrary to man's values, is slowly undermined by them until it falls in ruins to the joy of all. So it will be with Nietzsche's theory of the will to power. Even in its novelty it does violence to the mind of man; it seems to be scandal about the universe, which

remains scandal even for those who believe it. And they believe it out of exasperation, because they see men so often yielding to the will to power ; they are angry with men because of the incompatibility between their conduct and their values. But this very anger is an assertion of those values. We may yield to the will to power often enough ; but we do not value the yielding either in others or in ourselves ; nor are our values quite unreal because we so often fail to act on them. Indeed we are aware of their reality because our failure to act on them always pains our minds, as a blow pains our bodies. Even if we win material success by that failure, it is still a failure to us behind all the success ; and, in one way or another, we always apologise for it. Even those who say that this is a hard universe and that men need to be hard in it are apologising for their hardness. They do not value the universe because it is hard, and they would rather another in which there was no need of hardness. 'Thou stirrest us to praise Thee,' says Augustine to his God, 'because Thou hast made us to Thyself ; and restless is our heart until it rests in Thee.' Even those who deny the God cannot deny the restlessness. They may say that men could live easy if it were not for their pestilent values ; but only those do live easy whose conduct conforms to their values.

We may judge other men's values by their conduct ; but which of us would judge his own values so, or would doubt that they were his values because his conduct did not conform to them ? We

are all to ourselves good fellows at heart ; which means that our values are sound whatever our conduct may be. There is nothing that each man is so certain of as his values ; and what surprises him about himself is, not the values which seem to him more natural than nature itself, but his own failure to conform to them. And yet, because of this failure in others, we believe that their values are unreal ; by which we mean that they are only pretending to our values. It is the last and most disabling scepticism, to believe that men are all unlike even in their values, that they are a species only physically, and otherwise mere discordant individuals. Christianity, in its affirmation that all men are brothers, denies this. Men are brothers because of their common values ; without them they would be but discordant individuals, utterly cut off from any understanding of each other. It is their common values that make them able to understand each other, to recognise the same truth, beauty, and righteousness, when they see it ; and when they recognise it to desire it. Yet it cannot be denied that Christianity itself has seemed to make divisions among men. Those who believe themselves to be Christians have thought that unbelieving nations and races did not share their values, that the heathen in his blindness values the wood and stone that he bows down to. It seems to us that peoples far alien from ourselves do actually hold values different from our own, that there is nothing human but the flesh

in them. They are men in natural history, but not in their morals or science or art.

But this belief disappears with closer knowledge. The missionary who has lived among savages grows fond of them. They are just like ourselves, he will always tell you. They may have horrible rites and customs ; but, the better he knows them, the more he sees that these do not express their real values. They may think that they do their duty when they conform to these rites and customs ; but it is a duty which they conceive to be imposed on them from outside by those gods who express their sense of external reality when they see it apart from their own values. But, even while they are cruel, they do not value the cruelty ; it remains for them a painful but necessary exception in their conduct. And all men, everywhere and always, are shocked by the legalised cruelties of another age and country, because they are legalised and seem to deny the common values of mankind. There is legalised cruelty everywhere, among ourselves as among the lowest savages ; but the submission to external reality always seems ugly and absurd to the foreigner, and, the more foreign he is, the more ugly and absurd it seems to him. We are shocked by the cruelty of the Chinese ; yet they value cruelty so little that their favourite goddess is Kwannon, the goddess of pity ; and they are shocked, as they well may be, by the cruelty of Europeans. Always the impartial judgment of mankind approves only conduct in



accordance with the permanent values of mankind. Morality seems to be diverse because, everywhere and always, men have made their submissions to external reality, have disobeyed their values in their treatment of other men, of their own children, and even of themselves. They have done this, not merely through weakness, but also from a sense of duty, as we say ; duty, in this case, being a course of action imposed on them by external reality, whether they call it God or Nature. And often by a strange perversity it seems to them all the more duty, because it is contrary to their own values. But the secret of this tyrannous sense of duty is always fear, fear of that external reality which seems to them so incompatible with their own values. And opposed to this fear is faith, faith in the values of man in spite of all appearances, a faith which, as it grows stronger, becomes a belief that these values are the answer of man's heart to something, to some one, that is not himself, and yet is like himself in the love of righteousness, truth and beauty.

But from this faith we fall because, at first, we distrust, not our own values, but the values of other men. We see them hostilely and in the mass, as if we ourselves were not of them. All our tired and frightened beliefs about the nature of man come from seeing other men thus ; and nowadays we think it scientific to see them so, to judge them and their natures by the external symptoms of their conduct, and from these to conclude that they are



animals or machines. But we are never animals or machines to ourselves ; and the belief that we ourselves are exceptions to all our generalisations about mankind is a mere idol of the consciousness. Yet we are always believing this through the pressure of our own egotism, believing that, the further we travel from ourselves, the less we shall find of our own values ; as if they came from a private fire in our own souls, by which only those near us could be warmed, and outside this narrow circle there were always an inhuman cold. When we free ourselves from egotism we see that the fire is outside us like the sun and that all men feel its warmth as we do. Those who do not see this at last lose faith even in their own values ; for what they believe about others they come to believe about themselves, and their dislike and contempt of others becomes a dislike and contempt of themselves. There is a terrible unconscious sincerity of logic in the human mind by which, if we think that other men are animals or machines, we become animals or machines to ourselves. When we value nothing but ourselves, our egotism takes revenge upon us by emptying ourselves of value for us. But the first Christian command is that we shall love our neighbours as we love ourselves ; and this implies the command that we shall think about them what we think about ourselves. Otherwise we shall think about ourselves what we think about them, and we shall find nothing in ourselves worthy of love.

*Handwritten note:*  
✓ In those we love we always find our own values ; and we think perhaps that we love them because they share our values. It is our natural conceit to believe that these values are peculiar to ourselves and a few elect. Yet if we could look into the minds of those furthest away from us, of the Chinese, or even of the wildest savages, we should find that they shared our conceit as well as our values, and that to them we seemed cold and inhuman. And all the while there is the testimony of the ages, sounding like music from the past into the present, to tell us that these values of ours have been the values of all men, and that ✓ men have always rejoiced to express them in forms of beauty and so to testify to their everlastingness. The ages of wisdom for us are those in which men have seen the universe in the light of their values ; the other ages, in which they have submitted themselves to external reality, are like a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury. That wisdom on which ✓ we pride ourselves, the wisdom of ' seeing things as they are ' and trying to consent to them with joy, is a meaningless barbarism when we look back on it in the past. It is the Athenians that we remember, not the Assyrians ; and now, when we wish to insult our enemies, we call them Huns, meaning that, like the Huns, they live according to their notions of external reality not according to their own values. But there is no German who would deny his own values. Rather he would say that Germany is forced to act as she does because other nations do not

share her values. And that is the excuse which all men, not Germans alone, make for the cruelties which they do from a sense of duty. Never will they believe about others what they believe about themselves, never will they make the affirmation that in all men there are the same values. But that is the affirmation which Christianity makes, more consciously and clearly than any other religion. And it tells us that we shall be aware of our common values if we act on them. It is the refusal to act on them that makes us doubt them, first in others and then in ourselves. For man is of such a nature that he cannot keep a belief unless he acts on it ; to act contrary to his beliefs is to destroy them. Hence all the errors that infest our minds ; they are errors, not merely of thought, but also of conduct ; and we cannot preserve ourselves from them by reading what wise men have said in the past, not even by reading the words of Christ. They have no truth for us, and no meaning, unless we act on them ; and, if we act on them, they will lead us to truths that he never uttered. So there is no need for us to believe that he had a monopoly of all truth. Indeed, if we act on his truth, we shall see how many others in all ages and countries have uttered it ; we shall see that Christianity is not merely the Christian religion, but religion, still imperfect because so few have acted on it, still in the making and never in this world to be completed. If men act on it more and more, we may be sure that it will take on forms, and pass into

beliefs undreamed of by us. So far from being at the end of religious belief, we are in the first faint dawn of it ; for the mass of those beliefs which are called religious are more often bad science than bad religion. They are based on the observation of external reality rather than on man's values. Seldom yet has man dared to obey the teaching of Christ and to act on his own values. He would rather listen to the lies that external reality seems to tell him than to the truth of his own heart, which is the truth of God.

But still he has always the desire to listen to the truth of his own heart, always the desire to know the God who speaks in that truth ; and so the words of Christ are music to him, even though they be nothing but music. Those who say that they are false wish that they were true ; and that wish is the whisper of their values, not acted upon and so not believed. So the common failure to act on them engenders a common disbelief. That is why Christianity tells us that we cannot win our own private salvation ; to aim at it is to miss it. For it is mankind, it is the universe, that needs to be saved. All creation groaneth and travaileth together ; and we are to be saved only by desiring the salvation of the universe. So there is not one of us shall be saved until all are saved ; for we all share the common mind and its errors of conduct and thought, nor can we escape from its joys and sorrows into a private heaven of our own. There is in us a desire to love which binds

us, whether we wish it or no, to our own kind, to this earth, and to all that is upon it. Our desire is to love, and so we desire that all things may be lovable. Until all things are lovable, we cannot be saved. In that fact we may see the future of Christianity and its undreamt-of achievements, even some hint of its undreamt-of beliefs.

9-3-21  
Yours



## CHAPTER II

## THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF LOVE

CHRISTIANITY then is, first of all, an affirmation of our absolute values, that they are absolute, that they are common to all men, and that they are an answer made by man to that which is not himself. But these values need to be made plain to us, because they are a part of ourselves and not merely a comment that we make upon our experience. The natural man has them but is not fully conscious of them ; he obeys them only by chance and he does not acknowledge their supremacy over his appetites. Further, he may become, by the misuse of his reason, an unnatural man ; he may deny his values altogether, either at the bidding of his appetites, or at the bidding of a duty contrary to his values, which, he thinks, is imposed upon him by an external reality. This unnatural man, whom Christ found in the Scribes and Pharisees, was to him far worse than the natural man. The natural man needed to learn ; but the unnatural man needed to unlearn ; and this he would, and will, very seldom do.

✓ Christ was always trying to break down the sense of duty in men, the sense of a duty imposed. To

him the hypocrite was not the man whose conduct did not conform to his values, but the man who had denied his values, who was acting an inhuman part. And that is why he was crucified as a blasphemer. He did seem to the Scribes and Pharisees to blaspheme against their sense of an external duty ; and they seemed to him to blaspheme against the values of man. They made the word of God, which man knows from his own values, of no account through their traditions. Such traditions, such duties, are imposed upon the mass of men ; and they obey them from fear, from ignorance, from mere thoughtlessness. For them Christ had only pity ; but he had curses for those who imposed those duties on men, who obeyed their own pride, their own will to power, their own lonely and egotistical fears, and who forced others to obey them. It was they who placed stumblingblocks in the way of the foolish children of men ; and it would have been better for them if a millstone had been hung round their necks and they had been cast into the sea.

In Christ's denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees there is a more than moral indignation ; there is an intellectual contempt and an æsthetic disgust. They were playing a silly, private game of their own ; and they would force all other men to turn to it away from the great art of life. They would lay their burdens on the spirit of man and make everything dry and difficult and perverse. They were to him like those pedants who make

Shakespeare seem dull or Michelangelo a drawing-master. It is no wonder that he told them what would happen to them at the Day of Judgment. But his sayings about that are dangerous to those who misunderstand them, as the Pharisees misunderstood the sayings of the Prophets. We can see that, by the Day of Judgment, he meant the surprise that would dumbfounder the Pharisees when they were brought face to face with the truth. The natural man will not be surprised by it ; for he will find it in accordance with his own values that he has never utterly forsworn. But the unnatural man has forsworn it for that which he calls duty ; the external law which he obeys himself so that he may impose it on others ; the law which makes men cruel and stupid and pompous on principle. And the truth will strike him dumb. He will find that the law which he has obeyed, and to which he has sacrificed his humanity, does not exist. For him at the Day of Judgment chaos will be come again.

Christ does not argue with men about their values. He presents them so that the natural man can recognise them. In the Sermon on the Mount he does not deliver a series of commands from God ; he does not say that we are to behave in a certain manner because of the divine caprice. Rather he says—Behold your own true values. Blessed are the meek, the merciful, the peacemakers, the pure in heart. They are blessed in your eyes as in the eyes of God. And we know that is true ; we know that

the character which Christ blesses is the character which we ourselves bless ; that we should wish it to be our character if we were brave enough to defy external reality and the anger and contempt of all those who submit to it. Blessed above all, he said, are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, that is to say those who are filled with the passion of obedience to their own values. And at the crisis of his fate, when he stood before Pilate, the man of the world, the man who, though not a Pharisee, submitted to external reality and despaired of truth, he said these words—‘To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.’ There he made his appeal to the absolute values in man ; and it was because Pilate did not obey those values that he asked—What is truth ?

So the revelation of Christ, as of all great teachers and artists, is the revelation of man to himself. In it man can recognise what he would be. There is held up to him the mirror of his own nature according to his own permanent desires. The meek, the merciful, the peacemakers, are blessed, not by the whim of God, but according to the order of the universe of which man himself is a part. Their blessedness is as inevitable as the beauty of spring flowers ; and to see it makes other men desire to be like them, if they are not blinded by a sense of external duty. It is that blindness which makes the

Sermon on the Mount seem a series of violent paradoxes; and yet we cannot escape from the spell of it. We cannot escape from our values, however much we may deny them; for they are a part of ourselves and that part by which we judge ourselves and all other things. It is not so much that we are sure of our values as that they are sure; or that we know them as that they know. And this knowledge of theirs is different in kind from any other. Our knowledge of external reality is imposed on us by circumstance; it happens to us without our full consent; it is provisional, and like a working hypothesis, it may be revised or destroyed by further knowledge. But that which our values know cannot be so revised or destroyed. It is not learned from external reality but applied to it, and it is applied also to ourselves. Applied to ourselves, we call it conscience, but that in us which values and judges ourselves is that which values and judges all things. We ourselves are individuals, but the conscience in us is the universal, judging the particular in us as it judges all particulars. For our values, though they are part of us, are not the egotistical part; they are indifferent to our private fate in this world. In my values it is not I that judge, but all men; and they cannot be shaken in their judgment by my particular wants. That is why they are terrible to us and why we try to escape from them to an external law which we can interpret as we choose, a law made by individual men because it is external. For, being external, we never know



quite what it is. There is always some clumsiness in it that gives us a chance of adapting it to suit our own purposes. We can interpret it as men interpret statutes, and we can make it press hard on others and softly on ourselves. Every powerful man finds it easy to dodge external duties ; and, as for those who are not powerful, the duties are made for them, not by them, and they must obey. Nietzsche would have been right if he had said only of external duties that they are the product of the will to power ; but when he attacked Christianity, and he did attack essential Christianity, as the product of that will, he was strangely and perversely wrong. For Christ appeals always to our values against duty ; and our values are no respecters of persons. They are not statutes that we can interpret in our own favour ; and that is why we are so afraid of them, afraid of this power within us that is not merely our individual selves but universal man, and which makes affirmations from which the individual self often shrinks in terror.

For what does it affirm ? Not merely that we value this or that, but that we are right to value it always and above all things that profit our individual selves ; and, further, that what we value is not only some particular thing but a universal manifested in it. For, as our values are the universal in us, so they are always aware of the universal in what they value. It is mercy that we bless in the merciful and righteousness in those that hunger and thirst after it ; and

they are blessed because of this universal that is in them, because they value it and have grown like that which they value. In them the Word is made flesh ; but it is still the Word and has a reality of its own as intense as theirs. This universal, which we value in the particular, is not merely a general term that we use for our intellectual convenience so that we may be able to think about particulars in the mass. For those who are aware of beauty in beautiful things beauty itself is real, it is not a name like the names of colours or shapes. We do not value blue or oval in blue or oval things, as we value beauty in beautiful things. We can, and naturally do, separate in thought the beauty from the beautiful thing ; and we can and do value it. Further, we value it for itself and not as a means to anything else ; above all not as it helps us to live. And whenever we have this sense of absolute value, we have also the sense of the universal. The sense of value, indeed, is the instant result of the recognition of the universal by the universal that is in us ; it is the effect produced by the one universal upon the other, as light is the effect produced by the rising sun. We make this answer of absolute value to beauty, truth, and righteousness, as our eyes make the answer of sight to the sunlight.

Or we should, if there were not a particular in us afraid of this universal both within us and without. For this particular has its own values and judges all things by their use to itself ; and in judging them so it makes all things merely particular. So long as all

things exist for me merely as they help me to survive, so long as they appeal merely to my instinct for self-preservation, they are to me particulars that answer only to the particular in myself. I do not see the universal in them and do not value it ; nor am I aware of the universal in myself. I am a lonely individual finding all things and all men merely useful or harmful to myself. I must free myself from this particular relation before I can be aware of the universal within me or outside me, before I can have the sense of absolute value. And until I attain to this freedom, all things not myself have for me an inferior reality to myself ; for there is no common universal in them and in me. I remain lonely in my unique reality ; and it is from this loneliness that Christianity would free us.

For the love of which Christianity speaks is the sense of absolute value. When we love we are aware of the absolute value of that which we love. We cannot love any person or thing because they are of use to us ; nor can we even love them for the pleasure which love will give us. The love must happen to us before the pleasure. We must be aware of their absolute value before they can give us delight ; for the delight is the result of the sense of absolute value and of the freedom which comes with that sense. In it we escape from the loneliness of our own unique reality, from the insignificance of a universe in which we ourselves are merely particulars, and all other things are particulars useful or harmful to us.

In such loneliness the universe itself will cease to exist when we die ; it is for us entirely parasitic upon ourselves, and it is good or bad for us according to what we think about ourselves. Then what Hamlet said in his distemper actually becomes true. There *is* nothing good or bad, but thinking makes it so, thinking or feeling about ourselves. We are, in fact, shut into the darkness of self ; but love is like a light poured into that darkness so that we see an infinite reality that is not ourselves. And it is a light intellectual as well as moral. It tells us what is, no less than what we are to do ; we know what we are to do because we know what is. The whole universe is changed for us because we are changed ourselves, because we have a new experiencing power out of which there comes to us a knowledge surer than any other kind of knowledge.

Without this knowledge through love man would remain for ever in an impotent scepticism. He would see no reason for living except that he might continue to live ; and that would never be reason enough for him. He might, in sheer despair, resolve to believe what he was told ; but such belief is not knowing ; it is but hearsay, like what a blind man is told about the visible world. Real belief controlling action always comes through love, and the knowledge obtained in love. Love is the experience upon which belief is based ; and without it we can believe only negations, we can but deny. The knowledge obtained in love gives us a scent for

truth so that we can see what promise of truth there is in different and conflicting theories, so that, in the sheer weariness of scepticism, we do not fall to believing utter nonsense.

To every man who thinks sincerely there comes sooner or later a season of scepticism, in which he seeks to purge himself of the mere will to believe, that will which, as Nietzsche says, is but the disguised will to power. Then he is resolved to free himself, if he can, of that reproach which Nietzsche casts at all humanity, the reproach that all our beliefs are but efforts to make ourselves comfortable in a universe that is indifferent to us. It does not consult our wishes, Nietzsche says, but we have the power to play a trick upon it ; we can convince ourselves that it is what we wish it to be. In our faith we can live like drunken men who have forgotten all their pains and troubles and sing to the stars as if they were a delighted audience. But sincerity revolts against this way of life and would refute this accusation made by Nietzsche and whispered to every man by something in his own mind. So there comes a time when faith itself seems unfaith and a mere reliance on the achievements of others. Then it is, as Samuel Butler puts it, that men determine to give up Christ for Christ's sake. Others may tell us, then, what they believe ; and they may have earned their faith for themselves ; but they cannot earn it for us. They cannot earn a single value for us any more than they can earn the Athanasian creed. And we resolve to



live on no inherited riches of the mind but to dare the utmost poverty of faith, so that we may know what face the universe wears to those whose minds possess nothing; so that we may discover what power we have of earning a faith from it by ourselves. Naked our minds came into the world; and they shall not be clothed with the garments which other minds have made.

And what happens then to the naked mind? It can discover, if it will, that it was not born utterly naked, that the words of St. Paul are true—Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. When no prophecies are believed, when words seem to bear no likeness to facts, when our knowledge is rejected as no longer our own; then our absolute values remain to us. We cannot strip ourselves of them; for it is because of them that we have stripped ourselves of all else; because we have valued truth for itself we have forgone all the comfort of faith. So our love of truth remains to us. We have acted upon it and we know through our action that truth is; we know it, not through faith, but through love.

So these words of St. Paul have a truth which men discover only when they test them with their own experience, a truth which St. Paul himself perhaps could not have expressed in all its fullness. He meant more than he knew, as men always do when they tell the truth with passion, when they have

earned it not merely with their thought but with their whole lives. And yet he says more with his word love than we say with our phrase absolute values. For love does express the richness of the thing itself, of the actual experience; whereas absolute values impoverish it a little and estrange it from reality for the purposes of thought. When we speak of absolute values we are dangerously near implying that they can be perceived with the pure intelligence. When we speak of love we know that is not so. There is more than the intelligence in love, even in the love of truth. And, further, the phrase absolute values, leading us away from actual experience into thought, tempts us to think of that universal, which we value absolutely, as if it were something altogether different from the particular in which we are aware of it, as if we could value it without valuing the particular. But, when we speak of love, we know that it is also the particular that we love, and that we are aware of the universal only through love of the particular. Absolute values seem to us merely something to think about; and we cannot be convinced of their existence by thought alone. That fact is insisted upon by the Christian doctrine of love, by the very use of the word. However much we may think about absolute values, we cannot be convinced of them unless we act upon them; without that action they remain outside us; but they are real to us only when they act inside us. And the word love makes that plain. For love is

not thought alone ; it is feeling and thought, finding their satisfaction in act. Though we have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge ; and though we have all faith so that we could remove mountains, and have not charity, we are nothing. All these gifts are frustrated unless they complete themselves in action ; without that they do not even become themselves. Without action we think and feel about what has happened to us ; and our faith is not our own but borrowed from others. We may find eloquent words for it, but still we are not sure of it in our own minds ; and we talk to drown the whisper of our own doubt. We may speak with the tongues of men and angels ; yet, if we have not love, which must act if it is to be, we are as sounding brass or as a tinkling cymbal. Love alone beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. For it is both faith and hope carried into action, and without action they waste themselves in the void. And love is the beginning as well as the consummation of faith and hope ; for without it there cannot be that knowledge upon which they are based.

In the most utter darkness of scepticism a man who still loves is not without hope. He may think that he knows nothing about the nature of the universe ; and external reality may seem to him utterly alien from all his own values. Yet he knows that his values are in him and that they cannot be destroyed by the indifference of external reality.

He knows that they are not a mere expression of his will to power and that, if there is any meaning at all in reality, they must have some meaning as being a part of it. And this meaning is in them and not in something that asks them from them, such as the desire to live. And he knows further that they are in all men, for by his love he understands other men and sees that they are like himself. He is still preserved from the last scepticism, for which men are utterly individuals cut off from each other by their own egotism, so that no one man can assume anything whatever about any other, except his instinct of self-preservation. In all men he knows there is something answering to that which is not themselves. It is the way of Heaven not to speak ; yet it knows how to obtain an answer. That is the furthest scepticism of those who love enough to trust in love.

But love, as I have said, always knows itself to be love of the particular. When I love a man I know that I love him and not merely some universal in him. The very experience of love assures me of that. And my love could not satisfy itself with the statement that it was for God in him. To say that would be to turn God Himself into an abstraction. Those who love know that they cannot love either God or man in that manner. If it is possible to love God at all, and not merely to think about loving Him, we cannot conceive of Him as the good that is in all men, as a universal, impersonal good. That



which we love in men is not even a quality of them, it is the man himself ; as that which loves is ourselves and not merely a quality of us. We love all that is most peculiar and individual in them ; that is what we value, just as we value all that is most peculiar and individual in beautiful things. To seek for the secret of beauty by ignoring character is to miss beauty itself ; and a philosophy which values only the universal in the particular is like an art which tries to separate beauty from character. In all things the Word is completely made flesh. That desperate effort which the Athanasian creed makes to state two seeming incompatibilities with equal force must be made also by all thought about our values and what we value. For it remains true that while we love the particular we are also in the very process of loving made aware of a universal. Out of the love of the particular issues the love of the universal. When we love we are aware of another reality ; we have a sixth sense whereby we apprehend that reality which, without love, would be inconceivable to us. And this reality is not merely righteousness, truth, or beauty ; for, the more intensely we are aware of one of these, the more closely it implies to us the other two. Each of them has, as it were, the scent of the others about it, and is incomplete without them. Nor are we ever content to absorb ourselves in one, without reaching out to the others. We feel that beauty is not fully beauty to us unless we see truth and righteousness in



it ; that truth does not convince without righteousness and beauty ; that righteousness must be true and beautiful or it is not righteousness. We have a desire to see each of these working beyond its own proper sphere, to test it in the province of the other two. We are troubled if anything seems to be beautiful by means of a lie. We try to discover that beauty in art is always an expression of truth ; nor will we believe that an artist can attain to excellence through some moral defect. And so we will not believe that a man can attain to righteousness by means of illusion ; or that any truth can lead us to unrighteousness. Beauty, we say, cannot lie ; righteousness cannot be ugly ; truth can do no wrong. By such phrases, by such beliefs, we try to express our sense of their unity ; and this sense is truly a sense, something born in us and deeper than reason, something that cannot be permanently confounded by any observations which seem to refute it.

And the more we see these three universals as one, the more they come to life for us ; the more they exist, not merely in our thought, but in themselves ; beauty is to us most intensely beauty when, in its depths, we seem to find goodness and truth ; and goodness is never so good as when it is beautiful to us. There are times when some beauty of nature, investing the whole visible world, is to us the smile on the face of God. It is not merely beauty but the expression of a divine will ; and it is all the more beautiful because

it is that. We love all the things that are bathed in it, the cottages, the hills, the meadows, all the more ; but through them we love something else, of whose reality we are for the moment assured. And it is neither beauty nor righteousness nor truth ; all these words fail to express it ; they give to it the unreality of our language, and the separateness of our words. We know then that we understand further than we can say ; and then it is that those, who have the gift, pass into poetry or music or painting. But, except at such moments as these, there always seems to be a part of us making a fragmentary answer to a part of something else ; and we long for an answer made by the unity of ourselves to this unity outside us. Beauty, righteousness, truth, each of these three makes us aware that this unity is possible within us as outside us. Restless is our heart until it rest in Thee ; but still it sees the way to this rest, is made aware of the possibility of it, only through the love of particular persons and things.

So, in words, one tries to express what really happens in the mind of man ; and by the expression to assure oneself that it does happen. For these experiences are fleeting ; and we wish with words to assure ourselves, when they are past, that they have been. We wish to raise a monument to them in our minds, that we may remember them when we are most tempted to forget them in the mere task of living. And when the mood has changed, we are not sure

of what has happened unless we can say it to ourselves. Language is the instrument of reason ; and things seem to us irrational if we cannot subject them to that instrument. Indeed a great part of our scepticism comes from the impotence of our language. We cannot present our deepest selves to ourselves ; always, when we try to do so, we fall away from the fact through the clumsiness of the instrument. We misrepresent the reality ; and then believe in the misrepresentation, or fail to believe in that which it misrepresents. And the history of thought is full of these misrepresentations and of reactions against them. What every true philosopher tries to do is to represent the reality of the mind of man, his deepest and most valued experiences ; and constantly philosophers are drawn away from that reality by their own words and by the desire to be consistent in the error which those words impose upon them. Just because their representation is so poor, they try to prove it. But, if it were more like the reality, it would need no proof. Men would recognise the likeness as they recognise it in a good portrait even when they have never seen the subject of it. They would say—That is the truth. Nor would they deny it because it seemed to them inconsistent with some other truth ; at least they would try to remove the inconsistency, not one of the truths. But usually, when we are aware of an inconsistency, we try to remove one of the truths which seem to be inconsistent, because we are not

sure in our presentment of them that they are both truths. The likeness to both is equally feeble and we take our choice between them. So philosophers are always trying to empty the universe of content that they may make it easy to think about, as painters try to empty the visible world of content so that they may make it easy to paint; and it is supposed that art and philosophy consist in this emptying. But the result in both cases is mere emptying, against which there always follows a reaction. What is needed, in both cases, is a passion, not for consistency, not for picture or system making, but for the truth itself, or the very beauty. To represent that in its full richness may be impossible; but only through the effort can the means of representation be improved so that the impossible will become possible. Only so can we escape from a jargon of art or philosophy, the jargon which misrepresents because its purpose is to make representation easy.

This is not irrelevant because I wish to insist with equal force upon two facts that seem to be inconsistent; namely the fact that, if we love at all, we must love the particular; and the fact that to love is to love the universal, to become aware of it in the very process of loving the particular. And yet the more we love the universal the more intensely we are aware of the particular. We do not lose our sense of the one in the other but our sense of both is enriched. Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of these little ones, ye have done it unto Me. That is not a



mere edict of God, which He ordains because He will have it so. It is a statement of man's own experience. Those who understand it know it to be true of feeling and thinking as well as doing. And the truth of the saying can be understood better through the use of the word love than through the use of a phrase like absolute values, because the word love brings the actual experience more sharply to our minds. We know what love is because we have not merely thought about it but felt it; and we know that, when we have loved one of these little ones, we have also loved something else which becomes more and more real to us as our love grows in intensity. The very joy with which we perform an act of love is a joy in the universal; it is something done not merely by the particular ego but by universal man; and it is done not merely to the particular but to a universal which Christ, in that saying, calls God, calls the Father, using both words to assert the reality of that universal which we perceive through love. But there are many now who will not call that universal God, because the word God means to them not reality but unreality. It is to them a screen between themselves and what it means. They can believe in God only if they call Him by some other name, and often they are hindered from believing in Him because they have no name for Him, no means of presenting their belief to themselves.

There is for us always, in mere thought, an inconsistency between the reality of God and the reality



of man. How, if what we love so passionately is the particular man, can we also be loving the universal God in and through that particular? How can it be literally true that—Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of these little ones ye have done it unto Me? The little one is not God because he is himself; and the more we love him the more we are aware that he is himself, and that we love him for himself. And yet, as Christ insists, the good action cannot be done to God at all unless it is done to one of these little ones, to some actual living creature; nor can we be aware of God unless we love Him through the love of actual living creatures. He prayeth best who loveth best. The aim of Christ is to tell us this truth, to present it so that we know it to be truth; and not to explain away the seeming inconsistency in it by explaining away some part of the truth. But he warns us that we cannot be aware of the truth except through love. And so it may be hidden from the wise and prudent—from those who would rather attain to some consistency than be aware of the truth in all its seeming inconsistency—and yet be revealed to babes, to the simple who love. For those who love know it to be true. The truth happens to them so that they do not need to have it proved. They are in love with the particular and with the universal, and the more they are aware of the one, the more they become aware of the other. They do not need to rob the particular of reality so that they may give it to the universal. That which

seems impossible in cold thought happens to them in the warmth of love. They are like the great artist who attains to unity through richness ; no one can say how he does it, but in his work it is done.

So, according to the Christian doctrine of love, we understand the mystery of the universal and the particular only when we love. Thinking without loving will always make the universe seem impossible to us. We shall say of it what the man said when he first saw a giraffe—‘ I do not believe it ’—and that is the conclusion to which thought without love leads men always, although it is expressed in many diverse ways. They do not believe anything which they are capable of thinking. With all their words they can represent only an incredible universe to themselves, whether they insist on the inconsistencies of fact or ignore some facts so as to make thinking easier. In the one case the inconsistencies glare intolerably at them ; in the other the universe, which they have emptied of so much fact, loses its value for them and they are wearied by its insipidity. So men are wearied alike by their materialist and by their spiritualist conceptions of the universe ; and they rush from one to the other without finding rest in either. Matter is everything ; matter is nothing ;—neither of these sayings could be believed by one whose thought had grown out of his love. Both are the result of thought without love, thought gone cold, thought emptied of values. And nothing is so

incredible to us as the idea of a God conceived, not out of love, but out of logic. He is like the camel which the German evolved out of his inner consciousness; He is something which has never happened to the man who conceives him. There is an idea of God conceived out of logic, not out of love, in Calvinism, and it is a nightmare to us. The logic of Calvinism dragged the minds of men struggling and terrified to its conclusion; and they broke away from it at last as if they were waking from a nightmare. But so it is with all theories of the universe conceived out of logic not out of love. They are incredible to us even while they seem to compel our consent to them; and we awake from that compulsion with the force of our whole natures. This is not so—we cry, as we deny a nightmare with violent joy when we wake from it.

At this moment the whole mind of Europe is waking from the nightmare of materialism and is making a united effort to purge itself of the terrors of thought with which that nightmare has peopled it. The materialist universe is incredible to us; we deny its reality with every moment of our experience and with the whole force of our values. Can it be our minds, we ask, that have thought these things? They seem to us an inheritance not human, as if they were poisonous matter that we would expel out of our bodies. And yet our thought is still infested with the images of materialism. We disbelieve passionately but still we dread; and we shall dread

until we find a strong counterbelief conceived in love.

So logic is always lying in wait for those who think without love, whose thought is not directed by their belief in their own values ; and it can drag them to whatever nightmare conclusion it will. All men fear this tyrant logic of their own minds that can force them to believe the incredible even while they revolt against its incredibility ; and yet they will not have faith in the one power that can overcome it. They will strive desperately by argument to escape from those conclusions to which all their arguing forces them, forcing them, which is worse still, to action. There was a fatal logic, no doubt, in the minds of those mothers who gave their children to the fires of Moloch ; there is a fatal logic behind all our iniquities and cruelties to-day. Empty the universe of your values ; believe that love is but your own private and precarious comment on things ; and, whether you profess to believe in a God or whether you do not, you will always see Moloch, incredible but real, in the whole spectacle of the universe, as a child in a nightmare sees a sinister ugliness on the face of its own mother. This nightmare ugliness is expressed in all the writings of Nietzsche. It is the ugliness, not of his own brave and frightened mind, but of what that mind saw because it denied love, and because through that denial it fell into a nightmare. That ugliness he could not overcome with his own desperate sincerity. We

are always desperately sincere in a nightmare ; but, the more our fevered brains struggle, the more they are forced to incredible convictions ; and so it was with him. Nothing can be more incredible than the universe, and the mind of man, as he conceived them in the intensity of his effort to attain to truth without love. And yet thousands have cried that it is the truth and a glorious truth. They too have trusted in their own sincerity just because it made a nightmare of the universe for them, because it affirmed that Moloch was God. They have not seen that this Moloch is but the phantom that the mind creates in the darkness of its own egotism.

In our dreams we are cut off from the experience of reality and create for ourselves a world, sinister or kind, out of our memories of the experience of our waking hours. Because we are disconnected from the reality around us, we have an infinite freedom with the stuff of our dreams, which is only ourselves. But this very freedom is always within the prison of ourselves ; and, so long as we dream, there is no escape from that prison. Within it we may soar to the most extreme delights or sink to the wildest terrors ; and in a moment we may turn from delights to terrors. There is no external reality to correct us, to remind us of itself and what it is, nothing but dreaming memories that can make what they will of it. We are merely ourselves, shut into ourselves ; and we cannot direct ourselves through any relation with that which is not ourselves, as one could not



stoor in a vacuum. So from dreams we may know that man, when he is merely himself, is at the mercy of himself ; he is in the heaven or hell that he himself becomes ; and he may pass from one to the other in the twinkling of an eye. It is not the universe that acts upon him but only the changes of his own flesh ; and they play what tricks they will upon his mind, filling it with memories lovely or hideous of the reality from which he is cut off. This apparent freedom of his is really an utter slavery to an unguided self ; it can do what it will ; but it has no power to will, just because it has no material but self to deal with.

Man without love, without the constant sense of his absolute values, is in his waking hours as he is in his dreams. He is cut off from full experience of reality ; he is shut in the prison of his own egotism where he has a freedom of thought like the slavery of the dreamer to himself. In that freedom he can make silly heavens or vain hells of theory, each turning into the other as each disgusts him with its own incredibility. And there is nothing to protect him from these reactions, because all the while he is cut off from contact with reality by his failure to love. And, as in a dream, he is at the mercy of the changes of his flesh. They interpret reality to him so that he is optimist or pessimist according to the workings of his digestion. And, being aware of this fact, he believes in the supremacy of his flesh, which indeed is supreme. Without love we are slaves of

the matter which is ourselves. And, so the less we love, the nearer we are to that state of madness in which man is utterly and solely himself, in which reality does not exist for him except through the perturbations of his own flesh, and in which he can think himself God Almighty when he happens to be in high spirits.

From this prison, Christianity tells us, there is only one escape. It is only by loving that we cease to be merely ourselves and that we become fully aware of the reality of that which is not ourselves, so that we experience that reality as fully as we experience our own thoughts. Through love, through the sense of absolute values, we pass from sleeping to waking, from dreams that we spin out of ourselves to a knowledge of reality. In these dreams, these theories of ours, we are will-less, they turn to Heaven or Hell of their own accord; and we strangely mistake this will-lessness of ours, this utter passivity, for sincerity. Because our theories happen to us, we suppose that they must be the result of a passion for the truth in us; and the more nightmarish they are, the more they seem to be a result of that passion. We might as well see a passion for the truth in our dreams, which do but dramatise our waking hopes and fears, giving to the drama a happy or an unhappy turn according to the disposition of our bodies. We are not sincere merely because we have no control over what we think, because it is spun out of our own lonely minds and not struck out of the contact between the freed mind and reality. But love

frees us ; and only in that freedom have we the will to believe the truth, and the power to find it, in a universe that becomes credible to us through the knowledge given by love.

Never, perhaps, has the universe seemed so incredible as it does now, when we are waking from the nightmare of materialism, yet waging a war that is the result in action of that theoretic nightmare. We are like men who have started fighting in their sleep and wake to find themselves still fighting fiercely for their lives. The dream that set us fighting is discredited everywhere. All of us, except a few determined madmen, long for freedom, light, peace. And yet the habit of the nightmare is still heavy on our minds ; and still we fear that it is true. We see our own values as if they were far above us and no part of ourselves ; there seems to be an infinite distance between them and our actions which are so fearfully ourselves. Our whole society is like a man who has forsworn himself in a rage, who has done what seems to throw him so far below his former self that nothing of it remains to him but the bitter memory of what he was. And how can we have come to this pass in a credible universe ? How can there be this monstrous incompatibility between our values and ourselves ? If men are what their actions seem to prove them, why have their values persisted thus futilely in their incongruous minds, persisted only to mock them with impossible desires ? What function can they have in creatures whom they

serve only to make wretched ? If there is no reality except in that struggle for life which sets us fighting, why cannot we value that ; why is there this incessant whisper within us of an unreality which alone we can value ?

Christianity makes this answer to us. That which we value is the true reality ; but we are assured of it only through our values ; and we can attain to it only when we act on them, only through love. Without love we dream ; and that which we dream becomes incredible to us as soon as it reaches a pitch of logical madness which we cannot endure. For logic without love will make the universe incredible to us in our action, if not in our thought. Never can we act upon it without reducing it to an absurdity. But when we act on our values we do not reduce them to an absurdity. To act on them is to see that they are true ; it is to confirm faith with works ; it is to find reality with the whole of ourselves and not to lose our way to it in the mazes of more thought. Does Christianity speak the truth ? No one can say who has not tested it in action ; and those who have tested it cannot prove it to those who have not. They can only affirm their utter certainty, as St. Paul does when he says—I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Only through the music of those words can we understand their meaning, for that alone tells us what they meant to the speaker. He speaks of his utter certainty like a poet who, with his music, convinces us that he tells the truth about himself. He speaks like a poet in love ; and we know something more from the words of the poet than that he is in love. He makes us share the passionate certainty of his love ; and he makes us value the love itself, as being a truth to which we do not attain when we are occupied with living so that we may continue to live. But this love of the saint is a love of something universal, it is the answer made to another love which he calls the love of God ; and the universal in him speaks for all men. We know it, when we feel the beauty of his speech ; we know that his mind is flushed with the light of a reality which he, seeing it, dares to call by the name of God.



## CHAPTER III

## CHRIST AND THE CHRISTIAN

So far I have ignored one important fact about Christianity—That it is the most personal of all religions. For the Christian, Christ is not, first of all, a teacher, but himself. Whether he be called God or man, these are only words used to insist upon the fact that he is himself and that the Christian's desire is not salvation or righteousness or any generality, but to be like Christ. He is one who has fallen in love with Christ; and the peculiarity of the Christian religion and of the Christian character springs out of this fact. For the Christian aims at being a real person with all the intense reality and particularity of that person. To him Aristotle's, or any other, ideal man is vague and unreal. He knows the man he would be like; and that man is Christ.

Christ is the greatest figure in history, as Hamlet is the greatest figure in art, because of his reality; and he still has the power, because of this reality, to make men fall in love with him in spite of all their prejudices. Mr. George Moore, who, I suppose, believes no single article of the Creed, has fallen in

love with him and has written a book about him as if he had met him. It is like a memoir written with the licence of an artist and a lover, like another gospel, as different from the Gospels as Mr. Moore is different from the evangelists, but still clearly about the same person. And he is more at one with them than he supposes, because his subject and his passion are the same as theirs.

So great is the reality of Christ to us that we read the Gospels with an interest continually baulked. We guess at more about him than they tell us. We seem to know even when they tell us wrong, when they have misunderstood him, or when they have, unwittingly, changed his words or his acts so as to give him an authority or status which he does not need. For to the Christian it is not Christ's status that gives him authority but himself. Sometimes the Gospels are a little like an official biography; at least they try to make the message of Christ official and even to prove that it is like other messages of the past; and always they insist upon his credentials. But his credentials for the Christian are in him; and all the Christian desires is to know exactly what Christ said and did so that he may know exactly what he was. If only there had been a Shakespeare or a Dostoevsky, or even a Boswell, to watch him; one who did not wish to prove anything about him but only wished to draw him to the life. As it is, we feel sometimes as if we were reading Horatio's biography of Hamlet, that apology which

Hamlet asked him to write, and not Shakespeare's play.

And yet, in our eagerness, we are ungrateful and unfair. It is the Gospels that have made us eager. They have given us so much of the reality of Christ that they themselves warn us when they depart from it. And with this reality the Christian can still protect himself against all lunacies of theory and pedantries of fear and vulgarities of egotism ; as Hamlet triumphs still over the commentators and the speculators, and even the actors. The Gospels in their sincerity, even when it may be mistaken, have given us enough to set the imagination working securely. Christ himself, we know, was not invented. He was and is himself. And so those who are in love with Christ know what is Christian when they see it ; and this Christian quality is to them the first reality of the Christian faith. Their values are not for abstract qualities but for Christ and for the universe as seen with his eyes. There is for them even a Christian beauty, a beauty as peculiar as if it had been produced by one individual artist ; and we can recognise or miss this Christian quality of beauty in the work of particular artists. We find it in Rembrandt, but not in Raphael ; the Renaissance said good-bye to it firmly and proudly, and therefore the Renaissance is a little tiresome to us. There is nothing of it in many of Shakespeare's plays ; but we know how Hamlet, if he could have met Christ, would have turned to him, and how

Christ would have cured him of his fever. And yet Christ would have known why he hated the king and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. The murder of his father was to him only a symptom of the worldliness which he hated. It confirmed him to frenzy in his hatred and his loneliness, in his sense of unreality. And he needed a friend more real than Horatio, he needed the reality of one like Christ to answer to his own passionate reality. But there is most of this Christian beauty in King Lear; there are places where one can almost see Christ pass like a spirit through the play and cast a beauty upon it which Shakespeare had never dreamed of before.

Christ was not a philosopher; if you speak of his teaching you seem to do him a wrong, as if you spoke of the teaching of Mozart. He does not prove to us, he reveals; and what we say is, not even—That is true, but,—That is what I wish to be. And to be that does not seem impossible. Those who insist on the impossible perfection of Christ have never seen the reality of him. He is possible because he is real; and because he is real, he is ourselves. For whenever any one is utterly real to us, he is ourselves, projected into different circumstances; he is everyman. Every one is Hamlet to himself and every Christian is Christ, if only he could be Christ; and the unreality is the fact that he fails to be Christ. It is always ourselves, the everyman is most intensely ourselves, that we recognise in the convincing truth of art. I recognise myself, my own glorified ex-

perience, in *The Magic Flute* ; and all art, until I can do that with it, is to me merely something to be admired.

The Christian recognises himself in Christ, as not in other teachers ; and so Christianity is not an effort to be something foreign and ideal and impossible. Rather it seems a growth of ourselves as we might be if we did not hinder our growth, a flowering and fruiting of ourselves in a Paradise that might be here and now, if only we could be true to our own love of it. And at the same time, while we are under the spell, we know that all other men could flower and fruit so, that there is not an utter difference between them and us, but the same desire and the same sense of inadequacy, however pompously concealed. We recognise Christ in ourselves because we recognise his pity and understanding, which are his truth ; and that is a part of us as of him. So, for the Christian, there is no need of that miraculous change of all circumstance which Shelley needed for his millennium ; no need for all mankind to be freed from an external tyranny. The Kingdom of Heaven is within you. The words mean so much that we can only gasp at them. The Kingdom of Heaven is within all of us, even in those whom we hate most. The millennium is in all of us, if only we would yield ourselves to it. And we are sure of this when we are sure of the reality of Christ, for we know then that it was in him, and that he is ourselves, being every-man. We know this even of those whom we call



the tyrants of the world; they too are ourselves and the Kingdom of Heaven is within them, if only they could cease to thwart themselves of it. Christ said of them, when at the height of his suffering he was most himself: 'Father, forgive them; they know not what they do.' As he knew that he was the child of God, so he knew that they were children of God; that they were like him in their inmost passions, in their loves, if only they would confess them.

As for those fierce denunciations of his; they are part of his reality too, they are the fierce eagerness of one possessed by the truth. The man who is possessed by the truth says naturally—Hear the word of God—meaning that it is the truth and not his private word. And he says also—Why will you not listen to the word of God? His denunciations are but his effort to destroy the obstructions which men set up between themselves and the word of God. What he curses and would destroy are those lifeless masks, masks of conceit and pomposity and sham certainty, which men put on to protect themselves from the word of God. Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. These are the masks which the real men had put on; and behind them were still the real men from whom he wished to tear the mask; Christ knew that most surely when he hung upon the cross.

Was he perfect? The question itself misunderstands. It is not perfection that we love in him

but himself. And how irrelevant are the efforts to prove that he was right in all he said or did, that he is reported to have said or done ; that he was right for instance to denounce the Scribes and Pharisees, because he was God. There theology, when it is orthodox, is wiser than most people know ; for it insists upon his real humanity, not on a sham humanity put on to disguise the God. Indeed there is only one fatal heresy about Christ, namely the heresy called docetic ; which robs him of all reality, pretending that he was a phantom or a puppet on the earth, while the real God remained safe and calm and painless in His heaven. So the Incarnation was a trick played on mankind ; and there was nothing to admire or love in it, but merely an unintelligible celestial transaction, which we must applaud as if we were courtiers watching the king perform a conjuring trick. The devout are always falling into this heresy unawares, because they are afraid of the reality of Christ ; because they could not worship him if he were real. But any taint of the docetic heresy robs Christianity of all its power, which lies, not in its sublimity or consistency or even in its common sense, but in the reality of the Christ that all Christians would like to be, in whom they see themselves as they would be, and not some foreign and unreal perfection, whether God or man.

When we love a great artist and are utterly subdued to his art, it is not because of his powers which we do not possess, but because of the self, which is also

ourselves, that he reveals to us. The powers only reveal ; and the more they reveal the more simple and human they seem, so that his supreme triumph over us is to make us feel that we could do it all ourselves, that we are, with him, doing it all ourselves. And so it is with Christ. We feel that we could ourselves accomplish, not the miracles, which are to us as they were to him nothing, but the life, the character. He does not make his state of being hard to us but easy, not mysterious but simple. You can do it yourselves if you will, he says—The Kingdom of Heaven is within you. No doubt he said that suddenly, in a moment, when he saw that all men were one, one with him and he with them. And his great sayings all convince us that they were said so. They cannot be great sayings at all to those for whom they are official utterances ; nor can he be himself to those who think of him as having said everything officially and out of his divine past rather than in his human present. We make the very notion of God impossible when we think of him as doing everything by design and in cold blood, as lacking the most divine, and most human, quality of spontaneity. And how much more impossible and unlike himself does Christ become when we think of him so.

If Christianity now renews itself, and lives again in joy and pride and laughter and tears, there will soon be an end of all dispute among Christians about the divinity of Christ. Those who called him God

did so for reasons, whether good or bad, that are now meaningless. The bad reason was that they wished to give him an authority outside himself and his own words. They were partisans for him and would prove that he had no rivals; or they did not believe him or understand him enough to take him on his own merits. They needed proofs, like Thomas. The good reason was the sense of his supreme reality, and the desire to believe that God was real like him, was indeed utterly a person and not a celestial process; and the belief that Christ was God did itself exalt men's conception of God. But, though that reason was good once, it is not good now; for the belief in the divinity of Christ has done its work. It has made us dare the thought that we are all sons of God because of our likeness to Christ, and sons not by metaphor but in reality. God, for all those who really believe in Him now, is always a person, never a process; and He is better, not worse, than man. It is by the best in ourselves, in Christ, that we know Him. If there is a God, we are the sons of God; and Christ is one of us. He has his authority for us because he is utterly one of us and not because he is in any way different; and the more he is himself to us, the less authority or status he needs, whether human or divine. I do not need to think that *The Magic Flute* is more than human, before I can be aware of its beauty. If it were not beautiful to me, if it were not wise as only such beauty can be, what value to me would it have, even

if I knew that it had been communicated straight from God? In *The Magic Flute*, in Christ, in all men and things that make us aware of divinity, the Word is utterly made flesh. And we cannot make it more the Word by thinking that there is in the flesh some difference from our own.

There is no need for the Christian to be a partisan of Christ or to contend that he had a secret no other man ever had. His power to the Christian lies in his intense reality. If any other man can be as real to us, so much the better; we are not partisans between Mozart and Beethoven. If any one, by whatever means, becomes utterly real to us, we love him and the best in us has power to make us more like him. We only hate those who are hideously unreal to us; for we are convinced of their reality against our will and by external evidence. They are unreal to us and we hate them, because we see no likeness whatever in them to the reality in us. They may be like, and hideously like, the unreality in us, that part of ourselves which we deny. But Christ is like the reality in us which we affirm; and he has the power of affirming it for us no less than for himself. He has the power of expressing himself and us; not merely of telling us what to do, but of being it. His acts are eloquent to us because they are part of his character; he seems to do them, not because he thinks them right, but as a musician makes his tunes; and they express him like those tunes and affect us like them. And that no doubt is the reason why Christians



cannot help being partisans of his. He seems to each his own discovery and to speak personally to each. The Christian may be known, each one thinks, by the fact that he really does know Christ. His values are for Christ ; and his values are himself more completely than his actions, by which he is commonly misinterpreted. And so men are apt to use Christ as a stick for beating each other. They judge each other by their actions, which are so utterly inadequate to the value for Christ that each feels in himself and thinks no other can share. Continually men employ the Sermon on the Mount to put each other out of countenance ; but when it is so employed against themselves they feel the unfairness of it. To themselves they are their values and their values are for Christ.

Often those who proclaim the failure of Christianity in the world do so because they are sure of its inner success for themselves. They see few who are at all like Christ, and they denounce the churches for having made him unreal. But Christianity fails so obviously because it is so real and precise and personal a religion, because all men are sure that they could recognise a Christian if ever they saw one. He would be like Christ ; and men like Christ are rare. Therefore Christianity has failed ; and yet it has failed only as men fail always to conform to their values. The value for Christ remains ; and men do not feel that it is a failure in themselves. Each one of us is shocked by the war now because of his value

for Christ. It seems an apostasy of the whole world against that value ; yet we ourselves do not seem apostates to ourselves, only the world is an apostate. We can all feel like Christ when we are under his spell, as we can feel like Mozart when we are under his spell ; but we cannot act like Christ as we cannot make music like Mozart ; least of all can we act like Christ as a society.

And yet this value for Christ does affect our actions even as a society ; an appeal can be made to it which will move the world. When a man gives his life for Christ we do not merely admire his courage ; we recognise his values, that they are right. We are like the people of Rome who abolished the gladiatorial shows because the monk Telemachus gave his life in resisting them. A pagan people might have said that Telemachus was a brave man ; but they would not have been changed in their conduct by his death. Christian Rome recognised Christ in him. A new absolute had been born into the world, a personal absolute, of which the image is the crucifix. Not only are there men who live according to this absolute, but other men are moved by them and know why they are moved. It is because this absolute is Christ ; and they acknowledge it when it is made plain to them, when the Word once more becomes flesh before their eyes.

But now let us consider what is the character of this personal absolute. It differs from other absolutes because it is personal, not abstract ; and

because therefore it has a peculiar character of its own. One should be able to paint a portrait of the Christian, not as a type but as an individual. Christ has power over us because he was an individual, is an individual, we may say, so strong is our sense of his reality. The other ideals are not real, because they have not been realised. They consist of general qualities ; but the Christian ideal consists of a man. We know that if we saw him we should recognise him. He differs from the other ideals in that they are academic exercises ; they are like those ideal pictures or statues which express in the artist merely some disgust for reality ; but he is like a portrait of some one the artist has known and loved.

We know how Christ would have smiled at any one who was trying to be Aristotle's ideal man, or the superman, or the German notion of a hero. And why should he smile ? Because in each case the endeavour would mean merely the acting of a part, and of a part that could not be learned. In these vague abstract ideals there is no ideal. They demand a change, not in the man himself, but only in his circumstances. He dreams of himself as not uplifted to a conformity with his own values, but merely as living in a world which takes him for an ideal. The vision which he sees is of his own ego, as it would be if the universe were contrived to suit it. There is in all these ideals, as Nietzsche truly said, the will to power ; and that is why they are not ideals at all. Aristotle's ideal man, the superman,

the German hero, all behave as if the universe were their washpot; and this behaviour of theirs is supposed to be ideal. So those who follow these ideals can do nothing but behave as if the universe were also their washpot, which it never is. Their conduct is absurd; and it is only a question how long they will be able to keep it up. They are posed like conquering heroes; and sooner or later they will have to fall out of the pose and confess that they are as other men.

Every one of us in youth has his dreams of being a great general, a great orator, a great artist, or something else very great. But in these dreams, which we call our ideals, it is never ourselves that are changed, but the universe that consents to be our washpot. Armies go down before us like ninepins; crowds hang on our lips; duchesses weep and fling flowers when we fiddle to them. But we do not know how we annihilate the enemy; we cannot put this eloquence of ours into words; nor can we play the fiddle. It is we ourselves, just as we are, with all our natural incompetence, that triumph; and the ideal is in the triumph, not in a changed self. The most we can do towards achieving it is to behave as if we had achieved it; in which case the world reminds us very soon that we have not achieved it.

So there is always something absurd in these ideal supermen and Germanic heroes. They are like the huge statues which the Germans put up to their great men and which look as if their one desire must

be to come down from their pedestals and cease making fools of themselves. They affront the whole unconscious beauty of earth and heaven with their conscious ugliness ; and what, in Heaven's name, are they so proud of ? The superman cannot impose his will on the universe ; he can only behave as if he had imposed it and be for ever acting the part of a stage king off the stage. His one desire is for power ; and power, in its very nature, is something yielded to him by others, not a quality of himself. It is so, even if he professes to despise the world, if his model is not Alexander but Diogenes. Then too it is he himself that despises the world because of his superiority ; he despises it because he thinks he is better than it, not because he wishes to be better than he is. His very scorn is to him a symptom of his power ; and he must show it, he must act the part of the godlike scorner, so that he may be always conscious of his power.

Now it is a wonderful fact that no amount of misunderstanding and vulgarisation and partisanship, not all the bad pictures and hymns, not all the apologies and explanations and flatteries, have availed to make Christ ridiculous to any man. The fiercest atheist may make his jokes about God ; he does not make them about Christ, but only reproaches Christians with being unlike Him. A determined effort has been made to represent Christ as the first Anglican clergyman, but it has failed. He remains himself for every one, and so much



himself that we can see him, not merely in his great moments, showing mercy to the woman taken in adultery, or face to face with Pilate, or hanging on the cross, but also concerned with the most trivial matters ; and still he is himself triumphing over all routine in his reality. We can imagine to ourselves what he would have said on any occasion and to any man, how he talked to Mary while Martha was busy about the house ; how he would have talked to Nietzsche if he had met him ; whom he would have liked and whom he would have disliked. What Horace said of Aristippus is true of him, that he would be equal to every situation ; but it is true with a difference. Aristippus is the accomplished man of the world who can reduce everything to the terms of his own wisdom. He is like a good prose-writer who never fails because he knows the limits of his own art. For him all life is sound, reasonable, sometimes witty, prose. But Christ, without rhetoric or strain, with ordinary words and with a music that steals unnoticed into them, can raise everything to poetry. It is his natural speech, and he seems not to know it himself. We can imagine him at a dinner-party making no one uneasy, saying just what comes into his mind, and yet listened to and remembered by all for the rest of their lives. Often the worldly man resents those who profess to be unworldly ; they practise a counter art to his and do not practise it well. They insist that they are unworldly and not as he is ; and

this very insistence sets him against them, for they are evidently taking as much pleasure in their unworldliness as he in his worldliness. But we can imagine a worldly man listening to Christ as the master of a strange new art worth learning. And it seems so easy ; he does not strive or cry over it ; he is not a professor. He is himself a man of the world and something more, the man of another world, one who has not even refused the kingdom of this world but has transcended it, turning from jewels to flowers like a child.

What is his secret ? But one cannot call it a secret for it is so open, and yet so difficult to express. We do not know what discipline he underwent—perhaps the story of the forty days in the wilderness conceals it. Perhaps for a time he really was tempted to desire all the kingdoms of the world, and then was tempted to believe that God would grant him anything because of his refusal of them. But he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and said that he was appointed to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted and to preach deliverance to captives. He refused every kind of material and spiritual pride. And we are convinced that he really did refuse them, that he was not like Diogenes, who trampled on the pride of Plato with greater pride.

It seems to us easy and natural, this return to Nazareth, this preaching to peasants who knew him for Joseph's son ; or else we suppose that he did it

on principle, that he did everything on principle. But that is the way to make him unreal. Suppose rather that the struggle within him was over and that he went back to his own people because he wished to speak to them, to be with them, now that his mind was purged of all the most tempting nonsense that Satan has to whisper. And then they too began to whisper their irrelevant nonsense, as that he was the carpenter's son. They would not receive him as he came to them. He had forgotten all about status; but he found them still thinking about it, still asking why they should listen to one who knew no more than themselves since he was only a carpenter's son. Against such stupidity Christ himself fought in vain. They might have believed in him if he would have done a miracle for them; but he told them that he would not, so they thrust him out of the city. After that he might easily have given up the poor for their stupidity and talked only with the intelligent rich, such as Joseph of Arimathea. Then he would have been in no danger from the stupid rich, who would merely have shrugged their shoulders at the strange things he said. But the best of the rich were to him only a diversion. He would dine with them; but he returned always to his own people, with whom he could talk of realities, even though they would rather see miracles than hear his words. For them he had a kind of lovely folksong of wisdom. We can believe that he was always best inspired in a

pushing, chattering crowd, like a strolling fiddler of genius. Their silly chance-sayings called out the wisdom within him. He looked on them and knew what the unsheltered beauty and pity of life were ; and how the Kingdom of Heaven was not here, or there, far away, but within them, if only they could be aware of it. And all the others who were aware of a kingdom of heaven that did not exist were insipid to him. That young man who had great possessions and who did everything that was right, there was nothing for him but to become poor and expose himself to realities. And yet, when the apostles took Christ too literally and would turn his impatient answer to the young man into a universal command, he rebuked their pedantry. With God all things are possible ; and therefore man, with his laws, offends against the infinite possibilities of God which are in all men.

We cannot understand the teaching of Christ unless we are aware of his perpetual refusal to lay down laws and the perpetual attempt, even in the Gospels, to make laws out of what he said. His sayings happened ; they flowered suddenly out of the moment, in the midst of a scrambling, chattering crowd ; and we are always falling into the belief that they were edicts. We suppose that the Sermon on the Mount consists of edicts, particularly that part of it, in the fifth chapter of St. Matthew, which gives examples of the manner in which the law should be exceeded. The law, Christ says, is not



enough. Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. To Christ the law is always a limitation upon righteousness. It is meant to be a minimum; and men take it for a maximum. So he gives his examples of the law and then of the manner in which it ought to be surpassed. And in all of these there is a kind of extravagance; for he means that man must give lavishly out of the joy of his own freedom. He is to be a volunteer, not a pressed man. He is to obey his own sense of values and not a duty imposed on him; and his values will exact far more of him than any duty. And yet out of these very sayings men, and churches, have tried to make another code of laws. There is a Church law of divorce based upon the example given by Christ of the manner in which the husband ought to surpass the Jewish law of divorce. The worst of it is that this law-making is always partial, literal in one place and not in another. The Church does not take literally the command: 'Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away'; because to make a law of that would be to make the life of the rich impossible. It does take literally the words about divorce, because they do not affect the rich more than the poor, and because therefore it has some chance of enforcing them.

There is no way out of this difficulty except to



understand that all these sayings are not laws at all, not laws of the Church any more than of the State. They are appeals to the values of man and they end with the words: 'Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.' He does not make any laws; it is His perfection that constrains us. To that we can be drawn, if we will, like a flower to the sun, like the sunflower in Blake's poem:

'Ah, Sun-flower weary of time  
Who countest the steps of the sun;  
Seeking after that sweet golden clime,  
Where the traveller's journey is done;

Where the youth pined away with desire,  
And the pale virgin shrouded in snow,  
Arise from their graves and aspire  
Where my Sun-flower wishes to go.'

What Christ offers to man is the inexorable freedom of his own spiritual growth, instead of the rule of the law; desire for obedience, passion for restraint, fulfilment for refusal. God Himself does not command; He is; and if men are aware what He is, they will turn to Him as the sunflower to the sun. They will imitate His prodigality of righteousness with their own; and as for justice, it will exist for them no more than it exists for God. In the most authentic and the most surprising sayings of Christ he is always telling us that God is not just, that He exceeds justice. He maketh His sun to rise on the

evil and on the good ; and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. He rewards the workers in the vineyard all alike, no matter how long they have worked. There is more joy in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety-nine just men ; and the father of the prodigal son forgets justice in the divine excess of his love.

It is a dangerous doctrine, so dangerous that men have always ignored it except in moments of divine excess that come to them rarely. But these moments, Christ tells us, are wisdom. They are the experience by which we must judge all other experience ; without them we should know nothing either of ourselves or of God. In them we become the free children of God ; at other times we are the slaves of circumstance. But because we are all afraid of each other, we deny this freedom even to ourselves ; we bind ourselves with the laws we make for each other. Incessantly we externalise conscience, which is the desire to be perfect as our Father in Heaven is perfect, the desire to grow in the sunlight of God ; and we make of it a law of God, as if His light could be a law, as if it were something limiting and artificial like the statutes in which men express their power or their fear. This we do because we have no faith in the universal desire of man to grow in the light of God. Each man may be a sunflower to himself ; but he will not believe about others what he knows about himself ; and so he comes to disbelieve it about himself also, and subjects

himself to that law which seems to him so necessary for others. For we cannot escape from the universal; and we must accept a universal tyranny if we will not dare a universal freedom. But Christ tells us to dare the freedom; and that is why men have always feared even while they have loved him. That is why they have insisted that he was God, that he was in some essential different from themselves. They could not dare the freedom that he practised. It frightened them even in thought, so fearfully exacting did it seem to them. Never have they been able to forget that it carried him to the cross; and they have said therefore, with the strangest perversion of all his teaching, that he suffered on the cross by the command of God, being God himself. They wished to believe that so much could never be demanded of them, being men. They wished for a law without them, rather than a desire within them, a law that, with its limitations suited to the fears and weaknesses of man, might preserve them from such a test. They were ready to believe that God made His demands of man and laid His laws upon man, provided they themselves might put their bounds to these. They would submit to statutes if only they might interpret them.

And yet that belief that he suffered on the cross by the command of God, being God himself, has truth in it, if only we could see it. It was his divine answer to the divine perfection, not to the divine command, that carried him to the cross. He tells

us to make the same divine answer, because we are of the same nature with himself, no matter where it may carry us ; and his power lies in the fact that he did make this an answer even to the cross, and that he made it as a man like ourselves, assuring us that we too can make it, and frightening us with the thought. That is why we turn to him and away from him, why at one moment we love him as a man, and at the next, refuse to judge ourselves by him as being a God. He is our ideal but he is no standard for us. Rather than dare that dangerous freedom which he dared and which he offers to us through his own example we will submit to the belief that he is different in kind from us. And we will appoint priests to tell us exactly where he differs, we will persuade ourselves that they are experts in supernatural history. And they have always been only too ready for the duties we commit to them. By some means they have acquired this knowledge of supernatural history ; it is handed down to them, not merely by one man to another, but through a medium called the Church ; and this medium makes it truth, superseding even that truth which a man recognises in his own mind, as he recognises righteousness or beauty. The Church has a truth of its own, external but with more than the validity of internal truth, a truth to which internal truth must yield. So great is the frightened desire of man to escape from that freedom which Christ offers to him, that he will set up, between himself



and that freedom, an obstacle which he calls the Church of Christ.

Yet this Church itself is also possessed by the love of Christ ; nor can it turn itself utterly away from his truth and his freedom. While it insists that he is God and different in kind from man, it also maintains that he is utterly man. While it tries to turn his sayings into laws, it yet sees that the life is gone out of them when they are laws. Always there remains in it, perpetually renewed, perpetually re-asserting itself, the honesty born of the love of Christ. Christ is always there, like nature for the artist, to quicken the churches, to make them distrust their own rules, to inspire new saints. He is the living model, through whom the past of the Church really is connected with the present, as all the art of the past is connected with the art of the present by the passion for nature. Because he remains real, men can still love his reality and still make a new effort after that freedom which he offers to them.

This freedom, as I have said, is to be found in man's complete surrender to his values. He must utterly forget himself in them and forget all the temptations and intimidations of the world. Compared with them, duty itself is the world as much as ambition ; and, if a man surrenders himself to his own values, if he hears in them the voice of God, then he will utterly forget his own status in every form which it may take. He will not be to himself wise or good, any more than



he will be well born ; he will be neither proud nor ashamed of himself. And therein will lie his freedom. For the moment we rely on any kind of status we are slaves to it, tied and bound by our own past. Status is always the past. It is what we have done or what our fathers have done for us. If the German is proud of being a German, he is tied and bound by his past, he is predestined, to triumph perhaps, but still predestined. And any man who is proud of his birth or of his intelligence has committed himself to the notion of a static and iniquitous universe. The past lies heavy upon him even though it has given him a prize he has not earned. A man cannot dare to conceive of freedom except by stripping himself of all status, by purging himself of all pride in what he is. And it is Christ who makes men sometimes dare to do this. He, more than any other man, has discovered freedom for the soul. Again and again before him men had dreamed of it, but they never quite attained to it ; they never even saw how it could be quite attained to, because they did not desire to purge themselves of all pride of status. Every Greek was to himself a Greek ; every philosopher was to himself a philosopher. The Stoic morality, even, did not quite free the Stoic of the sense that he had acquired wisdom ; it was based on his pride in what he had made himself. Marcus Aurelius is always telling himself that he must bear with mankind because they are like children. But Christ said : ‘ Suffer little children to come unto

me, and forbid them not : for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven '—and what is more we are sure that he meant it. We see him as a man who yielded himself to his values like a boy to his first love ; and in all his moral sayings there is a beauty of passion as in the love-songs of Schubert. Even to call them moral sayings is to do them a wrong. Spirit has for him and in him the close alluring delight of sense ; and yet it is spirit. It is he who has taught Christian art to make a more piercing beauty out of the mother and child than the Greeks ever made out of Aphrodite.

That is what Christian humility means ; there is nothing slavish or oriental about it. The Christian is not humble so that he may please God ; he is humble because he is a child of God and all other men are children of God too, so what can he have to be proud of ? He and all men are children of God ; they are not grown up, not middle-aged and accomplished and dull. The wisdom of the ages is not behind them but before them ; the book of the universe has not all been read ; they are just learning to read snatches of it. Their father teaches them lessons and they must listen to them wondering, never saying, We have heard all that before—

Wise men, all ways of knowledge past,  
To the Shepherd's wonder come at last.

Only when they do that are they beginning to be wise.

I have said that the docetic heresy is the one fatal heresy about Christ and it is more insidious than we know. It is in the Gospels from the very first and has perverted their account of the Crucifixion and all men's ideas about it. Never can we rid our minds of the notion that the Crucifixion is an allegory or a ritual or both ; as St. Matthew could not rid his mind of the notion that every event in it was the fulfilment of a prophecy. We cannot understand it unless we see it as a failure, and one that really happened, unforeseen, disastrous, undesigned. It would have been better if Christ could have lived and taught and converted the Scribes and Pharisees. It was a waste that he should die so young, as the early death of Mozart and Schubert and Keats was a waste. The world lost all that he might have said and done ; think otherwise and you surrender your reason ; you believe that all is for the best in this best of all possible worlds ; you cease really to believe in evil, except for those who are born evil and predestined to damnation. But the mystery of evil is that it does really exist, that there is this waste, that Christ could cry on the cross—My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me ? that he could see the waste of his own death, the meaningless waste of it, as Keats saw meaningless waste in his own disease mastering him before his pen had reaped his teeming brain, as Mozart wept because he was dying before he had finished his Requiem.

Never have Christians really faced the Crucifixion

and the mystery of evil that is in it. They have not had enough faith for that, and, in their lack of faith, they have allegorised and ritualised it and seen it as part of a great scheme of salvation, designed by Christ himself with foreknowledge of the future and the triumph of Christianity. But, if only they would see it, Christianity has not triumphed ; and, whenever it has triumphed, it has done so by ceasing to be itself.

Face loved of little children long ago,  
Head hated of the priests and rulers then,  
If thou see this, or hear these hounds of thine  
Run ravening as the Gadarean swine,  
Say, was not this thy Passion to foreknow  
In death's worst hour the works of Christian men ?

Because we are always talking of the triumph of Christianity, meaning thereby the triumph of certain institutions which have triumphed, as the survival of the fittest means the survival of that which has survived, we think of Christ himself as consciously triumphing on the cross and of the Crucifixion as a ritual sacrifice. We cannot face the fact that Christ, like us, lived in time, that there was a future before him utterly unknown as there is before us, that pain was to him a terror because its future also was utterly unknown, and that its pressing unknown future wrung from him the cry—My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me ?

It is with Christ as with all the heroes and martyrs of the world. We never dare to face their true faith



or to see their true courage, even in imagination. We lessen them with the fiction that they had designed all they did and all that happened to them, as the Evangelists lessened Christ. They have told the story of the Crucifixion, and made it half unintelligible, with that fiction in their minds. To this day we do not know why he was silent at his trial—silent to all except Pilate; why he should have explained himself to that Roman and said not a word to his own people. All we do know is that a trap was laid for him, that the poor themselves turned against him, that his own disciples fled, that he gave up the hope of prevailing by reason and died silent.

Beyond that silence there is nothing, except its effect upon the mind of man. Out of that arises the Christian faith, but men are afraid of the Christian faith always and would turn it into some kind of inferior certainty. They would make of Christ no hero but a God, and not a real God facing the unknown darkness with the omnipotence of His faith and love, but a God who had turned the terrible and beautiful reality of life into a mechanism, a God certain of His own triumph and so by nature incapable of the heroism of man. William Morris found in the religion of the Norsemen the nearest expression of his own faith, because in that religion the Gods themselves were heroes who failed like men, with a dark future before them. And we shall never attain to the true Christian faith, the faith of Christ



himself when he was most faithful, until he also is a hero to us and one who failed, one whose death was part of the unintelligible waste of life.

We say that he triumphed by his death and then slip into the notion that he knew, dying, of his own triumph. But what is the nature of that triumph ? This, that it tells us what unforeseeing man can endure ; and that we too value above all things the endurance of unforeseeing man, the faith which is faith because it does not know, the purpose which is maintained even when it seems to be frustrated. Our faith is in the fact that we value these above all things, that there is something in our minds which answers to them as to music, and that we, weak and cowardly as we are, would do likewise if we could.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE GRACE OF GOD

IN matters of religion now we are bewildered by a divorce between the names of things and the things themselves. Often those for whom religious facts are real enough do not call them by their religious names, or by any name at all ; while those who use the religious names know nothing of the facts. Thus the experience of God may come to men who will not use the word God because it is commonly used by those who have emptied it of all meaning and who hope to acquire merit by the mere use of it, who express in it a certainty they have not earned and a passion they have not felt. They believe that God likes to be mentioned by men and that His name is a spell to attract His blessing. So often, when a preacher utters the word God, the interest of his congregation is instantly lessened. They know that he is saying what he ought to say and that they are hearing what they ought to hear. They acquire merit by the use of the word in their presence ; and they do not expect to acquire merit and to be interested at the same time.

Thus the word infects with unreality every phrase

in which it occurs and none more so than the phrase *The Grace of God*. Many attach no meaning to that phrase at all; for others it means only an outworn superstition; and yet even now, indeed now more than ever, it might be the battle-cry of one army in the great everlasting conflict of thought. We ought to be able to ask a man—Do you believe in the Grace of God?—and to know from his answer which army he belongs to.

For the doctrine of the Grace of God, expressed in the most general terms amounts to this—That man is born within a natural order in which he is governed by his instinct for self-preservation; but that it is possible for him to rise out of that natural order into another order in which he is no longer governed by his instinct of self-preservation but by his relation with a power above humanity, yet personal; and that he attains to this relation, which is love, by the help of that power, a help which is called the Grace of God.

This doctrine is not merely a dogmatic statement. It is based upon man's experience; but there are many who do not know that, because they suppose that when men experience that which is called the Grace of God they themselves must be aware of a God and a Grace, must give those names to both, and must hold the doctrine of the Grace of God. Yet the doctrine itself does not assert this. It merely gives the name of the Grace of God to certain experiences which all men, perhaps, have known at some time in their lives; and with that name it implies that these

experiences are of the greatest significance, that they are real and not illusions, and that men in their conduct and their beliefs ought to be guided by them. But the full meaning of the doctrine is often unknown even to the devout, because they are not aware of all the ways in which the Grace of God comes to men. They suppose that a man who is possessed by it must himself be devout in an orthodox manner, must be full of the praises of that God whose Grace has possessed him. They do not know that the Grace of God comes to us in beauty and in truth, in beauty that they would call pagan, in truth that would seem to them merely scientific. Whenever a man forgets himself utterly in either of these, he has some experience of the Grace of God, though he may deny the existence of a God or of His Grace. Indeed, we cannot be aware of beauty until we are freed from the instinct of self-preservation ; until we see things no longer in a merely economic relation to ourselves. Sheep, for instance, become beautiful to us only when they cease to be potential mutton ; nor can we be aware of the truth latent in a mass of facts until we cease to see those facts in a purely economic relation with ourselves. We must escape from that concern with our own individual survival, which is called selfishness, before we can be artists or men of science or philosophers, just as much as we must escape from it before we can be saints. This fact is not recognised by many of the conventionally good, because no action is to them unselfish except moral

action. They regard art and science as selfish activities, because they give pleasure to those who practise them. They are not aware that the Grace of God fills all who are possessed by it with delight, that it heightens both joy and sorrow, so that they are no longer selfish, no longer the slaves of the instinct of self-preservation.

There are, of course, those who do not believe in the Grace of God however it may be presented to them, who maintain that we cannot rise out of that natural order in which we are governed by the instinct of self-preservation; and that, when we seem to rise out of it, it is merely the instinct of self-preservation itself that deludes us. For them there is not a God, whatever God may mean, nor is there a Grace. There is merely self-deception by which men put themselves in love with life. But even they cannot deny the fact that men are possessed by a lasting desire to rise out of the natural order into another order, to exchange the will to live for the will to love. This desire may have to them no significance; they may say that it deceives rather than enlightens us about the nature of the universe; but they cannot deny its existence. It may be that we can live only so that we may go on living; but, if so, we resent this necessity as a tyranny imposed on us. Our resentment, our desire to escape from the necessity, is as much a fact for us as the necessity itself. Indeed more so, for we may deny the necessity but we cannot deny the desire in ourselves,



however much we may deny it in others. And what we wish to escape from is not merely the labour and sweat of the struggle for life but the conviction that it controls us in all things and especially in our relations with each other. It is not the certainty that we must die which irks us so much as the sense that in all our activities we are merely avoiding death. Men have faced death with joy because in doing so they have convinced themselves that they did not live to avoid death. Not death but the will to live is the enemy which men have always tried to overcome.

So far we can all agree with Schopenhauer. The will to live is to us all something foreign and hostile within us ; and we despise a man who has utterly capitulated to it, even when he wins power or wealth by his capitulation. It is that which impels individuals and whole societies to actions which they detest. Even when we believe that it has made us what we are we cannot conceal our dislike of it. But, while to Schopenhauer the will to live is the enemy, it remains for him the sole positive force in us or outside us ; and, since for him it is evil, for him evil alone is positive. Good is negative and consists in freedom from the will to live. He says that men can attain to that freedom ; but even in saying it he remains a pessimist. One way out of his pessimism is to affirm that the will to live is itself good, to praise it as men have praised God ; or, with Nietzsche, to call it the will to power ;—I am not concerned here

to decide whether this affirmation can ever be honestly made—the other way is to affirm the Grace of God.

According to the doctrine of the Grace of God we can attain to a positive freedom from the will to live, a freedom not by mere suppression but through another will, another passion. We can rise from the will to live to the will to love, because there is outside us that which calls for our love and which loves us, that which is of such a nature that it can be loved for itself. For Schopenhauer the universe outside ourselves is a void, and our desire to escape from the will to live is not an answer to anything not ourselves. Our love of righteousness, truth and beauty, is merely a love of something man-made and made in the effort to escape from the will to live. Indeed the joy we have in these things is in its nature a negative joy, the joy of escape, and not of escape to anything positive. Our highest values are for this negative ; but, if we hold the doctrine of the Grace of God, we believe that our highest values are for a positive ; and that our delight in righteousness, truth, and beauty is not delight in mere release from a burden, but our answer to a reality more real than ourselves, through which we ourselves become more real.

Both Schopenhauer and Christianity recognise a great fact of the human mind ; but for Schopenhauer there is no cause for that fact outside the mind of man ; for Christianity there is. Physically man

answers to his environment, and his spirit also answers to an environment. He has passions which are not sensual and are for a reality not perceived by the senses. For Schopenhauer the passions which are not sensual are for something merely negative, for an escape from certain realities. He will not postulate a reality to which we can escape. Christianity postulates that reality in the doctrine of the Grace of God ; and its postulate is based on our experience. For to us the passion for truth, righteousness and beauty is positive. It never seems to us merely a desire for freedom from the will to live. When we are possessed by it we seem to ourselves to be loving some reality and not merely desiring escape from a reality. Indeed in that love we accept life itself passionately and do not reject it as a thing of no value. We ourselves seem to be lost in it like lovers ; and we find that all our experience is heightened by our love ; we do not escape from sorrow but our sorrow and joy alike are exalted in quality.

For Schopenhauer both joy and sorrow are enemies, sorrow because it is to him mere evil like pain, and joy because it increases the will to live and so leads to sorrow. For him everything is a temptation and in that he represents all the pessimists. The idea of God is a temptation of the will to live, it is merely a lure that we set for ourselves, or that this malign will to live sets for us. It is a phantom with which we people the void ; and to this pessimism there is

no answer except in the affirmation of the Grace of God and in a life controlled by that affirmation. We may say that the pessimism does not work and that the affirmation of the Grace of God does work ; that the pessimism is barren and the affirmation fruitful ; but in merely saying this we cannot convince. The affirmation convinces only those who live according to it. One must experience the Grace of God, and know what it is, to be convinced of its reality.

Hence the value of the doctrine. It is an explanation of certain experiences which heightens their value for us. The experiences themselves happen to men as naturally as other experiences ; but they may be wasted, they may seem chance pleasures and the result merely of some unintelligible peculiarity in the human mind. There are times when every man escapes from the will to live in a passion for that which is not himself ; but if he does not hail this passion as true living, if he does not affirm it to be a passion for a reality, it may have no cumulative power over him and may come to him more and more rarely until he forgets that he ever experienced it. And men may even be constantly possessed by some form of it and yet see no significance in it. Thus an artist may sacrifice all desire for pudding or praise to the practice of his art, and yet may regard this sacrifice as a private whim of his own. It may not seem an answer in him to that which is not himself nor throw any light for him on the nature of the universe. In that case he will be

to himself merely a man with an itch for painting, as others have an itch for golf or for postage-stamps. There will be for him no connection between his passion and other passions of the same kind. He will see the saint as possessed by one whim, the man of science as possessed by another, the artist as possessed by a third; and he will recognise no common humanity in them all answering to a common divinity. As for those sacrifices which he makes for his art, he will make them because he is an artist, not because he is a man; and they will be to him part of the unreason, not of the divine reason, of the universe. Shadows we are and shadows we pursue. That is the comment upon the Grace of God made by those who do not recognise it in themselves.

But to recognise the Grace of God, to affirm it, is to be aware of the very scent of God and to be drawn by it the more powerfully because it is known for what it is. The scent of bluebells is stronger and sweeter to us if we know what it is than if we think it comes from a soap factory or is produced in us by some digestive process of our own. So men who are aware of the Grace of God in all its forms, for whom it is the actual scent of God, do live better according to all standards than those who are not aware of it. They are those whom other men love, because their sense of the Grace of God, while it heightens all their activities, delivers them from egotism. The man who is aware of the Grace of God cannot impute it to his own righteousness, for



he is not aware of his own righteousness. He knows that to think of himself instantly cuts him off from the Grace of God and throws him back into that natural order from which the Grace of God is deliverance. So he has a clear reason for the suppression of egotism. It means to him happiness, and a happiness which he need not fear as all the religious egotists fear it. To them, as to the pessimist, positive happiness is a temptation because they suppose that a man can gain it only by pursuing it, and to pursue it is selfish. For them God, though they worship Him, is in His nature malignant ; He tempts men to happiness, but it is not His will that they should be happy. He has made them so that, when they are happy in this life, they are evil. But for him who believes in the Grace of God, and who can recognise it in all its forms, God also has a passionate desire that men should be happy. He offers them happiness as the sun offers them light and warmth ; and His sorrow is in their refusal of His happiness. His frustration is in their egotism. He refuses us nothing, it is we ourselves that refuse ; and it is not He that punishes us, we punish ourselves. There is no need for us to torment ourselves ; our task is neither to love nor to hate ourselves, but to forget ourselves in the love of this reality which is not ourselves, which is God.

There is often a great bewilderment and inconsistency in the ideas of those who are intensely aware of absolute values but who cannot make the affirma-

tion that these values are the scent of God, and for whom the doctrine of the Grace of God has no meaning. I find an example of this bewilderment in Mr. Bertrand Russell's *Principles of Social Reconstruction*, a book in which absolute values are everywhere implied, in which, as it seems to me, the doctrine of the Grace of God is implied; but in which that doctrine is never consciously expressed and has no control of the writer's thought.

'All human activity,' says Mr. Russell, 'springs from two sources, impulse and desire, and impulse is blind. Blind impulses sometimes lead to destruction and death, but at other times they lead to the best things the world contains. Blind impulse is the source of war; but it is also the source of science and art and love.' So there are some impulses which he values supremely, the creative impulses as he calls them; and others, the possessive impulses, which he values not at all. But both to him are blind; and their power, their very virtue, if they have any, is in their blindness. 'Only passion can control passion, and only a contrary impulse or desire can check impulse. Reason, as it is preached by traditional moralists, is too negative, too little living, to make a good life.' And again 'the complete control of impulse by the will, which is sometimes preached by moralists and often enforced by economic necessity, is not really desirable. A life governed by purposes and desires to the exclusion of impulse is a tiring life; it exhausts vitality and

leaves a man in the end indifferent to the very purpose which he has been trying to achieve.' Nothing could be more true; it is the very truth which Christ preaches when he tells us to take no thought for the morrow. But Mr. Russell is bewildered by this truth, because for him all impulses are blind, and nothing can control them but blind contrary impulses. We remain therefore a battleground of different impulses, and the *we*, the whole of ourselves, seems to have no function except to judge them futilely by their results. For, so far as I can see, Mr. Russell thinks that we value our impulses only by their results; but this valuing of them does not enable us to control them; it is merely a comment we pass on them when they have done their work for good or evil. Miserable we to have this power of judgment only after the event! And yet I am sure that Mr. Russell does not really believe this or he would never have written his book. In it he implies throughout that our values have some efficacy, that they are not a mere futile comment. His appeal is to them and not to blind impulse, which must also be deaf.

Now the doctrine of the Grace of God, while affirming the value of certain impulses, like Mr. Russell, affirms also that they are not blind but seeing. There are the impulses connected with the instinct of self-preservation, which are not necessarily evil but which need to be controlled by the other impulses, that Mr. Russell calls creative. These are

for God ; and they come to us through the Grace of God. Further, we ourselves value the creative impulses above the possessive, not merely by their results, but because they are for God and because they come to us from God. We ourselves desire to rise above the struggle for life to be possessed by these impulses in which we forget it ; and it is the whole self that has this desire ; except in this desire the self is not whole, is not a unity. This desire is the will ; where it is not, there is no will but a mere anarchy, that conflict of blind impulses which Mr. Russell appears to see in us always.

From that anarchy men may deliver themselves, as Mr. Russell sees, by mere prudence, which is often called will, but which is only a negative kind of will, being the fear of all impulse. But this negative will, which men call reason, is, as he says, too negative, ' too little living to make a good life. A life governed by it is a tiring life ; it exhausts vitality and leaves a man indifferent to the very purpose he has been trying to achieve,' because that purpose is itself negative, is the purpose of the pessimist for whom the universe outside man is a void and for whom there is safety only in refusal. Reason by itself, that is to say, a mere judgment by results, will not give us life at all ; it will give us only the refusal to live. It is the instrument of man when he sees himself as lonely in the universe, when he trusts utterly in himself for want of anything better to trust in. And this trust of his is merely distrust of

all his actual content, of all his impulses. Whenever they are strong they seem to him dangerous ; and so he tries to weaken them all, and exhausts his own vitality. For, in weakening them, he weakens himself, he lessens himself. And, though he may not know it, it is the instinct of self-preservation always that causes him so to lessen himself. He that would save his life shall lose it. Whether a man is possessed by the desire for worldly prosperity or by the desire for salvation, he cuts himself off from the impulse towards God, the creative impulse, as Mr. Russell calls it, and from the Grace of God which is in that impulse, and becomes a mere puppet moved by a purpose that grows ever fainter and fainter within him. And as it is with individuals, so it is with whole societies. When they are utterly controlled by the instinct of self-preservation become a conscious purpose, when all their politics and institutions are conceived in terms of it, then the very instinct grows fainter and fainter within them, and they become more and more mere machines with an incessant dwindling of motive force. The instinct may present itself to all the members of such a society as the sense of duty, the householder's sense of duty to his wife and family. In that case it is a sense without courage and without joy, capable of frightful cruelties, incapable of any sacrifice except for self-preservation, which becomes more and more worthless and meaningless.

Against this aimless and joyless sense of duty Mr.



Russell rightly affirms the value of impulse ; but he will not persuade men to value it without the further affirmation of a supreme object of those impulses which are to be valued. And when the object is affirmed, we learn the use of impulses which in themselves seem to be meaningless and purposeless. For there are in us impulses, as Mr. Russell points out, which are neither good nor bad. 'Children,' he says 'run and shout, not because of any good which they expect to realise, but because of a direct impulse to running and shouting.' Yes ! and in a society governed by the instinct for self-preservation, and the negative reason in which that instinct expresses itself, their running and shouting will be suppressed, because it is not business, because it will not bring them success either in this world or in another. But by the Grace of God this running and shouting may be transmuted into dance and song. The mere blind sound and movement become sound and movement to the glory of God. The impulse that was meaningless expresses itself in a beauty which all can recognise ; and this beauty is good in itself, as God is good in Himself ; it is the Grace of God.

Nothing assures us more of the Grace of God than these exaltations of impulses otherwise meaningless. Men do not dance and sing with any further purpose ; but in their dancing and singing, in all their art, they make their answer to God, and in that answer, become expressive like God Himself. They are freed

indeed from the will to live, not negatively but in a living that is utterly of the present, that is like the lilies of the field and yet has all the complexity of man's heart in its beauty. How should man learn this transformation of himself except from a glory not himself to which he makes answer? But he must lose himself in that glory, if he is to make his answer. Dancing and singing, and all art, practised for the honour and glory of the artist are like lilies that fester and smell far worse than weeds. They are the most foolish and ugly of all human products, so foolish that when they go out of fashion they seem like the lunacy of devils. And all men have so great a desire for the Grace of God, even when they do not call it by that name, that they are constantly misled by counterfeits of it in themselves and in others, counterfeits of all its forms in which egotism hides itself even from itself. There is sham art, sham sanctity, and sham truth; and we are so beset by these shams that often we lose faith in the reality and think that all the higher passions of man are but illusions with which he hides from himself the dull truth about his own nature.

Even those who believe most firmly in the Grace of God are often tempted to believe that they have attained to the whole of it when they have not. It means to them certainty; and they desire the certainty more even than the Grace. They obtain it by an effort of will; but so obtained it is not Grace. There is a touch of this willed certainty even in St.

Paul and St. Augustine ; and sometimes they make us remember the words of the poet :

Ah, what a dusty answer gets the soul  
When hot for certainties in this our life.

In seeking for the revelation of God they sometimes overlook that in which He is revealed. They would force Him to reveal Himself, to put off the disguise in which He is hidden from them ; and all the while it is no disguise but the beauty of God Himself. So the God they find and declare to men is impoverished of content ; and what they get from Him is more certainty than Grace, since they get it partly from themselves. They are like artists so possessed by the desire to create that they will not let the visible world say to them all it has to say. They speak for themselves rather than make their answer.

But it is only when man makes answer that he attains to a certainty which he does not need to confirm by his own too precise statements of it, or by his anger against those who doubt it. The Grace of God is in St. Paul's words about love far more than in his theology. Those words transcend the natural order and are not mere speech but music. They are beautiful like the sunset ; and yet there are the precision of human thought and the tenderness of human feeling in them. Only once or twice in his life does it happen to the greatest of men to be moved and to speak thus.

For, because the Grace of God is the Grace of

God, no man can will it for himself. It is a free gift which not even St. Paul or St. Augustine could compel ; and sometimes it comes to those who may seem to men to deserve it least. For that reason there has always been a false doctrine about it, that God has His favourites, chosen no one knows why ; and this doctrine has caused disbelief in the fact of the Grace of God, and of God Himself. Clearly the Grace of God, if it exists, cannot be given to some men and withheld from others, like the honours of a king or a government, by mere caprice. It is not God who is capricious, if there is a God, but we ourselves ; and to invest Him with our caprices is to cease to believe in Him or in His Grace. If, then, we are still to believe in His Grace, we must see that it is a free gift from Him offered to all men, as the sun offers its light and heat. He pours out His Grace in all things that happen to us, in beauty that we may see or not see, in truth that we may discover or not discover, in the sacred goodness of other human beings that we may feel or not feel. And it is to be noticed that this sense of beauty or truth or goodness does not depend on mere ability of any kind. Simple and humble people may have it, men of great gifts may lack it. There are painters, writers, musicians, who can do anything except produce moving works of art ; there are brilliant speculators who can discover anything except the truth ; there are successful men of action who can do anything except what is right. Everywhere we see powers that



remain futile and perverse, even when they win fame, because they lack the Grace of God. That is a plain fact which no one can deny, even though he refuse to call that which is lacking the Grace of God. There is a sense of direction in all the higher human activities which seems to be independent of all other powers and which must be a sense of direction towards something. According to the doctrine of the Grace of God, it is a sense of direction towards God Himself. God is a fact, like the sun. He exercises an attraction upon us all. But because He is a person and it is the attraction of His desire, and because we are persons with a freedom to desire or not desire, we are not utterly subject to His attraction, as other bodies are to the attraction of the sun. We can refuse it or yield to it. We can forget God in ourselves or we can forget ourselves in God. We have an independence of God, because we have life; we are not utterly subject to His omnipotence, for, if we were, we should not be alive. There must be either an alliance or a conflict between us and God; and what He desires is an alliance on the equal terms of love. But this, again, we can refuse. There is the mystery of evil which is the mystery of choice, the mystery of life. And of that we can only say that it exists as life itself exists; and, if we deny it, we deny life. Life is the power of choice; and the more fully it is life, the more it is the power of choice. We have more power of choice than the brutes, because we are more completely alive and less



subject to the mechanical processes of the body. But this choice of ours, the choice between an alliance with God or a conflict, is not made once for all and in a moment. It is a choice that we have to be making always ; it is never finally achieved either one way or the other. The man who seems utterly cut off from the Grace of God by his own choice may suddenly open himself to that Grace ; the man who seems to lie open to it always may suddenly shut himself against it. We are always growing and changing because we live ; and the adventure of life is never determined for us one way or the other, because there is always the Grace of God pouring out for all men, and always in them the power to accept or refuse it.

What then is the difference between acceptance and refusal ? And why do we say that refusal is wilful and acceptance is not ? Why is it maintained that the Grace of God is a free gift from God and not the merit of man ? In that statement also a plain but difficult fact is expressed, a fact implied in the whole Christian faith. For the Grace of God is something not to be willed by man but to be experienced by him. In his relation to God man is a passive, not an active being. He cannot will to possess the Grace of God ; he can only lay himself open to it when it comes to him. And in saying this we merely state a fact about the human mind ignored by most men in modern Europe, because they have ceased to believe in a real God, and in His

Grace. We suffer from the disease of wilfulness; we believe that the universe is mere material for us to work our will upon, that we can make of it what we will and that every impulse in us, whether good or bad, comes wholly from ourselves. So our business in this life is to exercise our wills on the universe; and as for the sense of direction, it comes to us from our instinct of self-preservation, from our will to live, either individual or collective. This is believed by many who think themselves orthodox Christians; at least it is believed about all those activities which they call secular. But if there is really a God who pours out His Grace, no activities are secular, none are cut off from His Grace; and our business in life is to experience the Grace of God, to be passive to it, and not to make of the universe what we will.

Put thus in theological language this statement will seem to many empty of meaning. I will therefore try to put it in other language, for the moment speaking neither of God nor of His Grace; and, put so, I think it will have meaning for all.

The common belief of the western world is that the will is always exercised in action, that it is a will to work a change on external circumstances or on other men, and that this change rightly presents itself to us as the proper purpose of our lives. The contrary belief, the Christian, is that we have to work a change on ourselves and on the passive part of ourselves, on the manner in which we experience people and

things. That is the business of the will, and, unless it is exercised thus, it will never accomplish that which it sets before itself. It may accomplish something, but its results will be accidental ; and this is true of a whole society no less than of individuals.

Now the question between these two theories of the will is one of fact ; and yet most of us are not even aware that it exists. That is why we are so much bewildered by many of the sayings of Christ. We see them as commands to an impossible perfection, as the commands of a God who is utterly dissatisfied with us as we are and who tells us to be impossibly different. Or else we say that they are the desires of an amiable dreamer. It never occurs to us that they are meant to make life easier for us by teaching us where to apply the will, that they are the instructions of one who was a master of the craft of life. And so we do not try to understand the principle that underlies them. We do not really believe that there is one, whether we profess to be Christians or no.

And yet there is a principle underlying them ; and it is this—that man must enrich himself with his passive experience before he can act rightly ; that to act without this enrichment is to act wrongly. We learn wisdom, not by wilful action, but by a right passive experience, not by aiming at the glory of Solomon but by considering the lilies of the field. The will exists ; but we cease to believe in its existence because we apply it at the wrong point.

We act, and then the results of our action are not what we expect. So it seems to us that we are but links in an endless chain of cause and effect and that the will is merely an illusion of the mind which sees the link in front of it but not the link behind. This disbelief in the will is the result of a misdirection of it which fills us with a sense of impotence. We are indeed impotent if we try to work a change on the world outside us rather than a change on ourselves. But if we can work the change on ourselves and experience rightly, then our action will be right as a necessary result of our exercise of the will upon ourselves. This rightness will seem to others to be unwilled, because it is the character of our passivity, not of our activity, that we have willed. A man cannot be active according to his own values unless he has first been passive according to them. They must strengthen and enrich themselves in passivity before they can express themselves in action. Thus, I cannot act rightly to a man unless I have first learned to love or at least to like him. And I can learn to love or to like him only by a right passive experience of him. It is the manner in which his actions and speech affect me that controls my actions and speech to him. If the passive part of me resents him, the active part of me will betray it. Even if I exercise my will actively to do good to him, he will know that I dislike him and will dislike me. So my action will fail, because it is willed activity without willed passivity.

All hatred, all dislike, is really the refusal to experience. If I hate a man, I will have none of him, as a man. He is no man to me but merely a type of things that I dislike. So I am not aware of his reality; I reject it as a queasy stomach rejects food. This rejection seems to me willed action; but it is mere wilfulness, and a mechanical wilfulness like that of the queasy stomach. My real will, if only I knew it, is the will to experience him and all men and things rightly, to know them and to discover what is to be loved in them. My real will is for the knowledge of God and the love of God manifested in all things. The impulse towards that knowledge and love is the only one to which the whole of me can consent; the only one capable of being that unity which we call will. But this knowledge and love are in their nature passive; they happen to us, and we cannot ourselves make them happen. There again we are faced with the paradox of the Grace of God. We cannot make it happen to us by any exercise of the will. But we can, with the will, remove obstructions to it, the obstructions of mere wilful refusal. We can open ourselves to love and knowledge; we can let these happen to us when they offer themselves; we can see in them the Grace of God and not a mere impediment to our own wilfulness.

To take another example. The artist must have a right passive experience before he can express it in his art. But many artists fail through mere wilfulness. The painter tries to find his picture in



the visible world before he has laid his mind open to its beauty. He looks at it as an artist, not as a man. He begins to pick and choose, to arrange and reject, before reality has had time to stir and enrich his mind. His art to him is not his answer to the beauty of the earth ; rather it is the exercise of his will upon the chaos of nature. And so we see an empty wilfulness in it. Artists talk of composition, as if their task were to rearrange nature in their pictures. They should talk rather of emphasis, laid naturally by the mind upon that which has moved it. But before this natural emphasis can be laid, the mind must be moved by its passive experience of beauty ; it must see that relation which is beauty, and which exists for it to see. It must not will to impose its own beauty on the chaos of nature. The artist must be impressed as a man before he can express as an artist. And when he is thus impressed as a man, when his mind is enriched by a beauty seen and not made, then, if he is an artist, he can express it and men will be aware of the Grace of God in his work. We are not all capable of being artists or of thus expressing the Grace of God. But whatever a man's natural gifts, he cannot be an artist without this will to experience as a man, without this right passivity. In the mere wilfulness to create he may produce works that will seem artistic. He may surprise with his skill or with the daring of his experiments, but they will not produce the æsthetic feeling in others because they are not the expression of it in himself.

Many religious artists fail thus. They will to express some religious emotion ; but it is all wilfulness that they express. The religious emotion has not happened to them through their passive experience. They have not seen the glory of God and so they cannot paint it. All they give us is a sentimental emptiness, even more unsatisfying than the artistic emptiness of the virtuoso.

So it is with the strong, wilful man of action, the Napoleon, the Germanic hero, whom the modern world so much admires. His effort is to work a change on the world, not on himself ; and he may work one, but it is like the change worked by an explosion. And at the end of his life he stands among the ruins he has made, seeing himself merely as a blind force and admiring himself because he is stronger than other blind forces. The cynicism which overcomes these wilful men of action is the result of their growing sense of their own impotence. Since they can change anything but themselves, they believe that they themselves are part of a blind process of change. There is nothing in them but energy unenriched and undirected by experience ; and they differ from other men only in that their energy is greater. It is this wilfulness that produces what Mr. Russell calls the merely destructive impulses. But the creative impulses are produced by the exercise of the will in a right passivity, out of which men are moved to create, or rather to express what they have experienced, to give out what they

have taken in, as a flower gives out the light and heat of the sun in form and colour and scent.

This expression in its highest forms we rightly call inspiration, admitting thereby that it is the result of passivity, that it is not mere wilfulness in action. Inspiration, we say, finds its own expression, as if it were something in a man that masters him, as indeed it is. And inspiration is a better word than genius because it insists upon this power from outside a man through which the greatest things are done. Genius has lost this meaning for us and implies merely the power of the man himself. But we have to be on our guard against a common misunderstanding of the manner in which inspiration works, of the manner in which the Grace of God works in all its forms. We must not suppose that inspiration, or the Grace of God, comes to a man as a message which he has merely to deliver. Pictures of a muse or an angel whispering in the poet's ear misrepresent the fact of inspiration. It is not automatism, which is seldom inspired. It is not a message ready made, but the answer the mind gives out of a right passivity. And always there is in it the character of the mind that gives it. Mozart's tunes did not come to him ready made from heaven; his mind gave them out of its passive experience. That exquisite activity sprang from an exquisite passivity. And so it is with the men who seem to give out goodness as a rose pours out its scent. Their speech and action and thought are morally inspired because they have experienced

rightly. So, because we see in them none of the blind violence of the misapplied will, we are apt to suppose that there is no will in them at all. But they have known how to use their wills for passive enrichment. They are like those pictures of Chinese sages dreaming in the moonlight, pictures which themselves explain to us how they came to be painted. The man who is filled with the Grace of God has opened his mind, not only to moonlight and all the beauty of the earth and sky, but to all things in action and thought that are of the same nature as beauty. Passively he has experienced them as if his mind were a meadow steeped in moonlight; and actively he gives them out again, having made them his own with all his own character in them.

Many suppose that there is less vigour and richness in this life of right passivity than in the wilful life of the man of action. But they mistake violence for strength and calm for weakness :

The Gods approve

The depth and not the tumult of the soul.

It is the lack of experiencing power that drives men to violent action. It is because enough does not happen to them that they are so eager to make things happen; and there is a weakness in their refusal of experience. A Napoleon is halfway between a saint and a madman, in that his egotism is unable to face reality as it is. He may not, like the madman, create in himself delusions to satisfy

the demands of his own egotism. He may not think himself God Almighty. But he does try, with his own will, to work a change upon reality so that it shall recognise his greatness. And the world bows down to the greatness of a Napoleon because it too lacks settled values of its own through its lack of experiencing power.

It is, of course, a common belief now that man can have no permanent values, except survival values. And there is another belief, held by religious people, that man can have values for evil or values for good. Here they agree really with Mr. Russell's doctrine that man is a battleground of blind impulses, some creative, others merely destructive. For them he is a battleground of blind values, some for good, some for evil. But the doctrine of the Grace of God, and indeed the whole Christian faith when it is understood, implies that only one set of permanent values is possible to man, namely the values for God. Unless a man has those, he has not really any values at all but merely impulses, desires, appetites, none of which he is able to value permanently or with the whole of himself. There is always something in himself which refuses to value them and which remains unsatisfied in that refusal. Man becomes a unity only in his value for God, a value which he can attain to only by the passive experience of God in all those ways through which God manifests Himself. But where this passive experience is lacking, the value for God is necessarily lacking, and man is



without values, is a battleground of impulses and appetites and desires, all blind. The question whether or no this is true is of great practical importance ; for it involves the whole question of the value of passive experience. Our modern Christianity, especially that of the northern and protestant nations, distrusts passive experience because, having no quick sense of the reality of God, it does not believe that the passive experience of God in all His manifestations is necessary to man. Rather it thinks that all passive experience is idleness and it agrees with the poet that :

Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do.

To it all the external world, not being in any way a manifestation of God, is a mere danger to the passive mind of man. His only safety is in the active exercise of his will, upon it and upon other men. This view is held by the religious and by the irreligious. Both put their trust in the active will of man ; and for both idleness is the chief enemy. Hence our distrust of beauty, which seems, not a manifestation of God to the passive mind of man, but a mere temptation to idleness and self-indulgent dreaming. And we have the same distrust of thought which does not lead to immediate and practical action. Those who lay their minds open passively to the influence of truth and beauty, which are to the believer in God God Himself, are called mere dreamers or worse. The good life is the life of the

active will in action ; and the man of action is to us the good man, whether or no we call ourselves Christians. The world for us exists only to be conquered, it is raw material for us to make what we will of ; and as for beauty, if it exists at all for us, it is something that man makes for himself in his triumphant leisure after conquering the world.

There is in all our morality the notion that man must never let himself be at the mercy of external influences, that he can be kept out of the public-house only by business ; and for us the function of morality and of religion is to keep us out of the public-house by setting us other tasks to do. The active will must glut itself in some kind of activity, and there is no alternative for it but business or 'vice.' So for us the chief sinner is the idler, the tramp, the wastrel. We are not aware that Satan finds some mischief still for busy hands to do. And yet if only we would look about us we should see that it is the busy hands that do the most mischief. It is the most dutiful, the most industrious, nation in the world that has made this war. Wastrels themselves are made, poverty and misery are made, not by idleness but by our 'industrial system.' Nor is it merely greed, merely a wrong set of values that works in that system. Rather it is the blind energy of men, whose will and industry we all admire. Mr. Russell would say that they are governed by the possessive impulses, but there, I think, he does them an injustice. Their impulse is too blind to be called possessive. Rather

it is like that impulse which makes children run about and shout. Children do so because they have not learned the art of passive experience. If they learn it, their running and shouting become expressive of that experience, become dance and song. Our admired 'organisers' never learn it; and so their impulses remain blind. But these impulses are good to them and the world so long as they find a vent in work and not in 'vice'; and there is no alternative for them but work or vice, the one good and the other evil. But work means to them the exercise of the active will upon all men and things. Men and things exist for them only to be made use of; when they are not making use of them, they are idle and in danger of becoming vicious. The result is the defilement of the earth with our manufacturing towns and the debasement of men into tools. Can we wonder that more and more we see mere futility or perversity in the will of man, or something malignant in the whole nature of the universe which turns that will to futility or perversity?

There is in us a growing sense of sin which expresses itself in different ways. In the belief that man must be incessantly active if he is not to be vicious, and in particular that the poor must be set to work so that they may not waste their time and money; or in the belief that there is some fatal incompatibility between man and his conditions, that he will never make a good job of his task of adapting himself to them; or in Nietzsche's theory that all our values

are wrong and that we must change them. But all these theories ignore the question implied in the doctrine of the Grace of God, the question whether or no God really exists. For most of us, whether we profess to be Christians or no, He does not really exist ; at best He is the expression of our desire that He should exist ; and so we never think of living as if He did exist, as if it were possible for us to lay our minds open to Him. We are always talking about the will to believe. It is to us like all other will, an active will. Our notion is that we must set our teeth and say—I will believe, just as some of us set our teeth and say—I will be an artist. But if there really is a God, we shall not believe in Him unless we experience Him ; and we shall experience Him only in passivity to all those forms in which He manifests Himself. If there is a God, He is not far away in His heaven, telling us by messages through His favourites what we are to do. He is actually present always, in all righteousness, all truth and all beauty, and we must be aware of them if we are to be aware of Him. He has no favourites, nor does He reveal Himself at one moment and hide Himself at another. He is present always, for all men to be aware of ; in the beauty of the earth ; in that meaning of things which we call truth and which is there for all to see ; in the minds of men themselves, in their will when it is will, when it expresses their values which are for God if only they knew it.

To know it, to be aware of God in our own values



and in the values of all men, to be aware of Him incessantly in the beauty of the earth and in the meaning of all things, that is to be possessed by the Grace of God. And when men are possessed by it, they are not lost in mere idle contemplation of it. The artist is not an idler. He cannot but express all that his mind is enriched with by passive experience. And so the Grace of God in all its forms finds its expression in right action. But this is always the result of right passivity and without that there cannot be right activity or anything but the venting of blind impulse ; at least if the doctrine of the Grace of God be true. Certainly we have not got much wisdom or happiness out of our belief that it is false.

But there is one reason why men disbelieve it that deserves some respect. They think of the Grace of God as a private matter between God Himself and those who are possessed by it. And they are encouraged to think of it so by our failure to conceive of Christianity as a religion, as a faith, entirely social. God Himself for us is not a social being, any more than a king is a social being. We do not see the real meaning of the doctrine of the Trinity, namely that personality exists only in relation to other personality, and that, if God were alone, He would be inferior to man as He would be lacking in personality. Therefore, if God exists, He is not alone, but a society ; and the Athanasian Creed is not a mere lunacy of logic but an effort to express this paradox, with a little bad temper caused by the



difficulty of expressing it. But if God is a social being in His relation to God, He is social also in His relation to man. His desire is to rescue, not individual men only, but the society of mankind, of the universe. His desire is that all men shall be possessed by His Grace ; nor is it possible for any one man to be possessed by it fully until all are possessed by it.

We cannot understand the doctrine of the Grace of God until we know that ; and from that it follows that the Grace of God in this life does not ensure happiness ; nor will the desire for happiness give it to us. Often the desire to love brings unhappiness to those who are most possessed by it. The more a man is filled with it, the more he is aware of his incapacity to love other men and so to love God through them. He looks about him and sees millions whom he cannot love, millions who are made unlovable by being too poor, or too rich. They live trivial lives, and the saint himself feels that his own life is trivial so long as there is all this iniquity in the world. He is, as it were, in a room full of foul air and can see the sun and the mountains and the meadows and the flowers only through shut windows. So there are men like Tolstoy and Morris who will not enjoy what they see through the shut windows. Rather they try to open the windows so that all may enjoy what they see. They seem even to refuse their own private portion of the Grace of God. They will not be exquisite products of a society based on

slavery ; for they do not believe that God is a connoisseur of beautiful souls, works of art produced no matter at what cost. They rebel utterly against the doctrine of the survival of the fittest, either in this world or in another, and whether the fitness be spiritual or physical. For them there can be no hope of happiness except in the salvation of all through all ; and so they will sacrifice their own fitness, their own peculiar grace, rather than that it should be peculiar. In such men with their wrath, their heroic loss of reason and beauty and all private treasures of the spirit, there is a new and more difficult Christianity—or is it the Christianity of Christ himself, who could not be happy in the world as he saw it ? Through them, perhaps, we can understand the strange passage in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans where, just after he has risen to the height of joyful certainty in the Grace of God, he says : ' I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh ' (Rom. ix. 2, 3). He could not be happy in the Grace of God while it was not shared by all his brethren, because he knew that they were utterly his brethren, because he knew that the Grace of God could not be complete until it was shared by all. That is one of Paul's sayings that makes us love him, showing that he was too full of the desire for love to be content with a private happiness. So in all those who really attain to a

portion of the Grace of God it breeds not happiness but desire, as it bred desire in Christ himself. They cannot be content with a private Grace of God ; for they know enough of God, through their portion of His Grace, to be sure that He is not content with it. It is the very view through the windows that makes them aware of the foul air within. So they become angry and unhappy and seem perhaps to lose the Grace they possessed. They may transcend the struggle for life, but they know that in all material things they are transcending it through the labour of others who cannot transcend it. So they refuse high and tranquil moments of joy, they seem to refuse the Grace of God itself ; for they know that they have not earned it until all men possess it. Take no thought for the morrow. What is the use of saying that in a world where most men can take no thought for anything else ? As for the beauty of the earth, it has no meaning while so many are cut off from it. It speaks in a solitude which the rich have made and which it is a mockery to call peace.

From the restlessness of such men, from their unhappy greatness of thwarted desire, we may learn that mystery of faith, hardly yet dared by Christianity itself ; that God is not happy until the whole universe partakes of His Grace. His heart also is restless until we all rest in Him ; and a man is most like God when his heart cannot rest because other men do not know what he knows or love what he loves.

## CONCLUSION

## THE FUTURE OF CHRISTIANITY

‘It is the weakness of Christianity,’ a friend wrote to me lately, ‘that it is an alien religion imported from a remote country and civilisation; so that people say in their hearts of it—“This is not for us or for our day.”’ They do indeed; and many even of those who most desire to be Christians think of Christianity as something strange and romantic. Christ remains for them a foreigner clothed in an eastern dress and performing miracles such as do not happen nowadays. His very sayings are mysterious; they mean far more than they say, and so they do not mean what they say. Above all, they are not what any man would naturally say or think now; they were provoked by his experience, not of this world, but of another; and, even if they were provoked by his experience of his world, it was not like ours. We do not think of Christ as subject to the routine of life as we know it. His world seems to us exotic, exciting, vivid; and we think that it must have been so to all who lived in it. We see it as a contrast between primitive Jews and splendid, sinister Romans, and as a turbulent mixture of both.

And in this mixture and contrast we imagine a universal consciousness of something wonderful about to happen, as if all were waiting hushed for a new birth of time. There was terror in it and beauty, and towering evil and entrancing innocence, as in a great tragedy; but never for a moment the dullness of reality as we know it. The triumph of Christ is not for us over routine and dullness but over evil. Then a man could take sides for good or evil once and for all; but now there are no sides to be taken. The sharp contrast and conflict between the two is to us unreal; it belongs to art rather than to life. For us there is no Satan who tempts us in the wilderness; and we never go out into the wilderness to be tempted. We live in the Cromwell Road, and are men of business, for whom life is full, not of good and evil, but of problems which no one can solve. We never meet men like Pilate or Herod or Caiaphas, still less like Christ.

And yet for Pilate and Herod and Caiaphas there must have been dullness and routine. Probably the whole trial of Christ was routine to Pilate; and all these men may have cherished in their romantic hearts some religion that had never been naturalised there. We forget that Christ was always warning men against this very delusion. The Kingdom of Heaven is within you, he said. It comes like a thief in the night. But so incurably romantic are we that we make a romance even of that saying. We think that the Kingdom of Heaven, if there were



such a thing, would come in the night and wake us all up. But the saying means that it comes while we remain asleep. It is always with us ; but we look for it to be advertised by signs and wonders ; and, looking so, we are never aware of its presence and come to believe that there is no such thing.

So, thinking of Christ as a foreign and romantic figure, we miss the plain meaning of his words. We expect, if we are devout, that it will suddenly be revealed to us by magic ; and then we shall understand the secret of the universe. Or else, by reaction, we believe that there is no meaning in his words for us, that he was a kind of Dervish unintelligible to civilised man. This notion of magic has always beset and perverted Christianity, for it is one of the persistent infirmities of the human mind. There is some form of words that will change the whole aspect of reality for us, if only we know how to use it ; that will force God Himself to yield up His secret to us. So people talk of the blood of Jesus, and nauseate others with the phrase. We shall all be washed pure in his blood ; and then we shall see God and rise above dullness and routine. It is the dullest people who tell themselves these things ; and it is stupid to laugh at them, for we are all dull and all hope to escape from our dullness by some magic, new or old.

But Christ tells us that God has no secrets. He confides always to those who have ears to hear. He has no more secrets than a piece of music, in which

can be heard the vast omnipotent yearning of the love of God. It is possible, in the playing of a piece of music, to see merely a number of men behaving in an unintelligible manner, to hear disconnected, inarticulate noises. A savage might ask—If these men have anything to say, why do they not say it? Or he might think they were performing some magic and look for a miracle to happen. And all the while there is no miracle but they are simply speaking, as plainly as they or the composer can, to those who have ears to hear. And they are not speaking of another unknown world but of this one, of experience common to all men. The beauty which they pour out, for those who have ears to hear it, is only the answer of the composer made to the universe as we all see it and know it. Beethoven did not see angels or hear them; he saw men and women such as we see, and the same stars and the same changes of the seasons; and, if he speaks to us like the love of God, it is by no magic nor do we need magic to understand him. Only through the experience common to us all can we understand him; and, if we think he has a secret to tell us, if we tax ourselves to express it in thoughts and words, we shall find nothing at all, or only some nonsense of our own making.

So it is with Christ. He speaks of our common experience and not of unseen worlds and secrets known only to him. So only through our common experience, only through what has happened in that which we call the routine of our lives, can we under-

stand him ; and if his words are to have any meaning for us, we must look for their simplest and most obvious meaning. Christianity, like great art, is also common sense ; it is what all men might think, if they would not try to think too far and so did not think astray. Consider, for instance, how many of our worst follies and crimes come of theories that nothing in heaven or earth justifies, not even our own self-interest. Wars, for instance : no one in Europe wishes to wage them ; yet we do wage them for some empty concept, forgetting men and women, and even children, in it. We say, the Germans say, that this war is between England and Germany ; but that is not the truth of it. It is between men who call themselves English, and men who call themselves German, it is not nations or races or ideas that fight but flesh and blood. It is men who die and women who are widowed and children who are left fatherless. A low, cowardly, material view, the romantic patriot says ; but it is the Christian view ; and, if all men held it, there would be no war ; nor would those who hate war, and all the nonsense that provokes it, be forced to fight for their own wives and children.

The great error of the Germans in this war, an error shared by all men more or less, except perhaps the Chinese, is that they see a nation or a race as a person ; and in that error they no longer see themselves or others as persons, they cease to act like men, or to treat other men as men, or women as women, or children as children. They have their

theories about Teutonic and Latin races which do not exist. They make for themselves images of Germania in shining armour with a mailed fist ; and there is a stale, tawdry ugliness in the very language they use about this idol of theirs. They must even call a row of stinking trenches, in which men suffer and die for nothing, the Siegfried line ; and there is no such person, as they well know, to make a line. There are only Germans, men like ourselves, to suffer and die in holding it, for Siegfried, for Germania, for glory ; and there is no glory at all but only gas and stench and pain.

If Christ could have spoken to those Germans who willed the war, he would not have met their theorising by some other theory ; he would not have countered the lunacy of a professor with some divine madness of his own ; he would only have told them all to think no more about their theories, but to think of men and women and children. ‘ Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of these little ones ye have done it unto me.’ That saying might make them remember what they have done, if it were possible for them to think in terms of real things at all, if they knew the real from the vapours of their own minds. Men are not less men if you label them German or French or English. Souls are not Spaniards too, as Crashaw said. That way madness lies, the pedantic madness that has possessed mankind all through the ages, that expresses itself in the theories of professors, as in the war dances of savages,

only more dully. The Germans, at their maddest, talk of their Realpolitik. Realpolitik is to be aware of men, women and children, not of idols who demand their sacrifice.

But we are possessed by the same madness at home, and use phrases of our own no wiser than theirs. Instead of thinking of men and women, our own countrymen, we think of labour and capital, and demand and supply, and the class-war. And when we see human beings in want, we tell ourselves that their want is caused by natural forces. When we pay less than we should for the work of men and women, we say that we are obeying the laws of demand and supply ; which means that we demand as much as we can force others to give us. These others are not men at all to us while we think of our laws ; but Christ tells us that we should think of them always as men, not as the proletariat or as producers or as labour, or any other word that hides their joys and sorrows from us. For if we saw them as other men, that is to say as they are, we should pity them ; and our pity would be like a bodily pain warning us not to harm them, as bodily pain warns us not to harm ourselves. Pity indeed is a warning pain of the mind which tells men when there is some danger to their common happiness ; and yet we use all the dull opiates we can devise to numb this pity, as if it were itself dangerous.

When Christ tells us to be merciful, he is not telling us of a strange, unnatural accomplishment



that we need to learn. He is telling us to clear our minds of the nonsense that dulls the pang of our own natural pity. But just as there have been ascetics who tortured themselves and felt no pain because they were dazed by a false theory of righteousness ; so all through the ages men have tortured each other and felt no pity, because they have forgotten their own hearts in some cold pedantic frenzy of thought. From such frenzy neither art nor science nor religion nor the sense of duty can preserve mankind. Aristotle believed that slavery was a necessity because, he said, some men were born slaves. That was his theory ; but he forgot the plain fact that they were born men. Augustine thought nothing of his cast-off mistress because he was thinking of God ; and no men have ever been so dutiful as the Prussians are now. But if it had been possible for those dutiful Prussians to see the Belgian country people in the summer weather of 1914 making ready to gather in their harvest, if it had been possible for them with their duty-blinded eyes to see one mother and father with their children in a cottage, and not only to see but, like a poet or some other poor fool, to feel their hopes and fears, to be like them, to be them for a moment ; and then in another moment to see a smoking ruin and the father hanging from his apple-tree, and the mother mad, and the forgotten baby crying for milk—then they could never have done what they have done. For then to them it would not have been Germany invading Belgium, one abstraction

doing a necessary wrong to another, but men killing men and driving women mad and starving children who had done them no wrong, and all through a sense of duty to a word.

Their crime seems to us monstrous ; but we shall understand it better if we look at home. For at home too our own countrymen suffer, not such sudden calamities, but slow miseries ; and, though we do not wilfully cause them, yet we do cause them and say that they are a necessary evil, as the Germans said that the invasion of Belgium was a necessary wrong. And in our politics, instead of being driven to action by pity, we theorise and do nothing. Our theories of the present seem to us very wise ; yet we know what folly the theories of the past have been, and we cannot understand how men were drawn away by them from their plain duty and from the wisdom of their own hearts. But men are drawn so by new theories that change with every generation, because they forget actual men and women. Nothing is so easy as to seem wise to yourself, if you empty your mind of all facts ; and the chief facts for us, as Christ told us, are men and women. Forget them and you may be the wisest fool in Christendom. So we all forget them in our politics and seem wise to ourselves and fools to posterity.

For we never ask ourselves the simple question—why we should have politics at all ; and so we never learn the simple answer, which is—So that we may

make our love and pity for each other stronger in its united force than our individual instinct of self-preservation. The true political will is the will to rise through and above the struggle for life, and to rise all together; not the will to regulate that struggle so that those who have succeeded in it may remain secure in their success. That is not the political will at all but the will to power, disguising itself in theories and phrases. And there is no political wisdom at all except in this will to rise together above the struggle for life. But this will, in which is all political wisdom, is begotten in men simply by the love and pity of actual men, that love and pity which fools of the world call sentiment. But real love and pity are the opposite of sentiment; for they must express themselves in action and, the stronger they are, the more they will express themselves in successful action. Love and pity, as Christ told us, are not brainless passions; the brainless passions, that breed mad theories, are hatred, greed, mercilessness; for they can be satisfied with any theory thrown up to justify themselves, as we see now so clearly in the lunacies of German professors. Love and pity do not seek to justify themselves but only to express themselves in action; and so now if we, the mass of prosperous people in this country, consented to our love and pity for the poor, we should be moved to action and to wise action. We should not believe any more that we were masters of political wisdom and could make no further advance on the experience

of the ages ; for we should know that, since there are so many poor among us, with all our power and wealth, political wisdom has not begun among us. We should know that it is to be found by experiment, by daring, by sacrifice, having their source in pity too sharp to be ignored.

For all wisdom, for all right exercise of the intellect, there is needed first of all right experience. Things must happen to us rightly before we can act rightly ; and our right experience of men is to love them, and to pity them if they lack what we possess. But life seems dull to us and we are oppressed with a meaningless routine, not because there is more routine and dullness now than ever before but because we are not moved to love and pity by our fellowmen. And so it has always been, even in that age of Christ which seems to us so momentous. We may be sure that it did not seem more momentous to Pilate, or to Caiaphas, than our age seems to us. They were men of business and, between them, caused the Crucifixion as a matter of business. Behind that crime there was worldly wisdom and some dull theory ; and, if Christ had experienced things as they did, life would have been a dull routine to him too. But we are apt to miss the meaning of his life because we think of him as God and so as different in all his capacities from ourselves. We suppose that he knew secrets we cannot know. How easy it would be to be both wise and passionate if you could see the glory of heaven as well as the dullness of earth, if you could

hear the voice of God saying to you through the chatter of men—This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. But we misunderstand Christ and all men whom we call inspired, if we think of them as miraculously gifted with some knowledge of the nature of things which is withheld from us. If they hear the voice of God, it is because they are moved so passionately by the chatter of men. Those men whom Michelangelo saw, and from whom he drew his athletes, were like the men we see. The sounds which Mozart heard were the sounds we hear ; and Shakespeare witnessed the life we witness. If, as may be, he drew Hamlet from a real man, we might meet such a man and see nothing out of the common in him. The power of all these was their power of experiencing what happens to all men ; and so it was with Christ. The churches tell us to be like him ; but they tell us also that he was different in kind from us ; and how then can we be like him ?

But he tells us that we are none of us different in kind from each other. The secret of wisdom can be learnt by all of us, for it is no secret. God Himself is not hiding from us ; He is always revealing Himself to us in all things, if only we will look for Him in all things, in men and women and in the lilies of the field, and not in our own dull theories.

All through the ages, to philosophers, to priests, to moralists, wisdom and passion have seemed to be opposites. The aim of wisdom, it has been thought, is to rid men of those hard taskmasters the passions ;



and that riddance has been promised by Stoics, by Buddhists, by their modern follower Schopenhauer, as an end desirable in itself. Even Plato, himself a poet, would banish the poets and their incentives to passion from his Republic. Yet he would crown them with garlands, thereby confessing that there is something which mankind values in the passions and in the poets' expression of them; and the fact remains, for all the philosophers may say, that mankind do not value wisdom without passion; in their heart of hearts they do not think it wise. Nor does Christ; for he affirms that only through passion can we attain to wisdom, and in him wisdom forgot its dull dignity and became passionate. Through the ages men had been over-awed by the figment of the cold, wise man who withdraws himself from human emotions and becomes like God, knowing, but not feeling, good and evil. But the cold, wise man, like the cold, wise God, has never existed; sanity itself comes of warmth not of coldness, and coldness is a symptom of insanity. It is not God, but the lunatic imagining himself to be God, who looks on the world with an imperturbable calm. No man who is or tries to be cold ever is wise. Catch him off his guard and you will find that he is the slave of some secret absurdity begotten of his own egotism. And all the mass of cold, worldly wisdom, which intimidates us all so much, is generated among individual men, each of whom believes some particular prosaic nonsense of his own. Their common wisdom,

as it is called, is merely their refusal or their failure to be passionate.

For Christ there was no necessary conflict between wisdom and passion ; rather he knew the passions that are themselves wise, and he rose to the conception of a God passionate like the father in the parable of the Prodigal Son. Love and pity, he said, are the wise passions, the passions felt by God ; but before he told this to men wisdom was a chance thing, for men did not know how to experience life so that they would gain wisdom as a plant draws light and heat from the sun. They knew, perhaps, that love and pity were good ; but they did not know that they were wise and the source of wisdom. They saw that the passions bring joy and sorrow, and no man can tell which they will bring ; but they supposed that wisdom must bring joy, or at least the absence of sorrow ; and so they divorced it from the passions. But when Christ said—Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted—he proclaimed that wisdom does not imply joy or the absence of sorrow. It is born of the sorrow of those who have opened their hearts to love and pity. What matters to us, he taught, is not whether we are joyful or sorrowful, but the quality of our joy and sorrow, the quality of our passion. Before him men had found quality only in joy ; and the wise man was he who escaped sorrow, even he who refused passionate joy lest it should turn to sorrow. But those who would escape sorrow by such a refusal do

not know the meaning even of joy, do not know that a high passionate joy is of the same nature as a high passionate sorrow. They are kindred in their quality and in the wisdom which they bring; for both are gifts from God.

Unless you know this, joy itself will be merely a chance to you and you will learn no wisdom from it. You will seek it blindly not caring about its quality. But joy, without the quality it shares with sorrow, is sterile; and there was some sterility in the magnificent joy of the Greeks, for, even when it was true joy, in the sunlight, in the beauty of the earth, in the noble works of man, they did not see that it was of the same quality as true sorrow. And to them sorrow was always a riddle, 'a blast of the envy of God,' or at best a warning to man not to be overweening in his joy. The sun shone for them, and then was hidden, and a cold wind blew. There was the caprice of the weather in all life, because joy meant something to them and sorrow did not. And for that very reason joy itself did not mean all it might mean. Pindar can say—Blessed is joy and the joyful life of the gods; but the joy which he sings consummates and exhausts itself in his glorious art because he cannot also say—Blessed are they that mourn. The art is there and lovely in itself; but it does not flow into a wisdom beyond itself. Beyond his music and the succession of his radiant images there is nothing but silence and vacancy. It contents while it lasts, like sunlight; but a cloud

can veil it and it is gone. His joy does eternalise itself in expression ; and in that expression man does become God, but only in terms of art, only in music which is a beauty of the mind like the beauty of mountain tops flushed by the sunrise. But when that music, with its mood of joy, is passed, the mind is no nearer to God than before. The outpouring of the mind is divine, like the beauty of the earth, but not the mind itself. The divinity has passed out of it into music, and there is an end of it. The passion has exhausted itself in art ; and so that passion was valued by the philosopher only as the material of art, and he might refuse to value art just because its material was passion.

So there was a conflict in the ancient world between the recklessness of art and the caution of philosophy ; and there has always been, ever since, this conflict between all art and all philosophy that are not Christian. The Puritan hated art because for him it could not be Christian, since he himself was not fully Christian. But in the doctrine of Christ, though he never spoke of art, there is implied a harmony between art and philosophy, because there is a harmony between wisdom and passion, because for him only the passionate life is wise. He never spoke of art ; but he told men to make an art of their lives, and not merely a science. He told them to aim at living with the creative freedom of the great artist, the freedom that comes of mastery in the expression, not in the refusal, of passion. He told

men to turn their passions into actions, as the artist turns them into art ; and he told them which passions are fruitful in action and which are sterile. All the passions of love, all those in which we forget ourselves for something not ourselves, are fruitful. If we trust them and turn them into action, we shall never be confounded ; never shall we be wearied by that conflict between wisdom and passion of which the philosophers talk, by that life of the will which, as Mr. Bertrand Russell says, is a tiring life and leaves a man at last out of conceit with the goal as he attains to it. In the wisdom of Christ there is the warmth and freedom of appetite itself, the richness and ease of nature ; for it is a wisdom that refuses no faculty of the human mind and is dismayed by no weakness. Its aim is to transform and not to reject whatever is man. All that passion of his which may degrade him to a beast can uplift him to a God. Whatever he may be by nature, that nature, in all its qualities, is stuff to be transfigured ; there is nothing in him that he need reject or despair of, and nothing in other men. And why ? because true life is positive, it is the life of passion ; and all things in the nature of man may feed that passion. There are no waste products, unless man chooses to waste them in refusal, in hatred or fear or contempt, in all those passions which frustrate themselves, being in their origin not passionate.

Those Christian mystics, who see in the meeting of the bride and bridegroom an image of the union of



the soul with God, do in their audacity attain to the uttermost meaning of the teaching of Christ. For this physical passion of love is a true passion, in that it accepts and does not reject, in that it creates and does not destroy ; and in it is the wisdom that secures the physical life of man, the wisdom that sees beauty and does not fear it. So Christ proclaims a spiritual passion of the same nature, as positive, as real, as warm, as reckless ; a passion concerned with what is and not with what is not, which pursues and does not flee ; a virtue that it is never fugitive or cloistered.

The thwarted lover of *Modern Love* cries :

Cold as a mountain in its star-pitched tent,  
 Stood high Philosophy, less friend than foe :  
 Whom self-caged passion, from its prison bars,  
 Is always watching with a wondering hate.  
 Not till the fire is dying in the grate,  
 Look we for any kinship with the stars.

That is the reproach which poor passionate men have always cast at the philosophy which rejects passion. At best it offers us only a consolation and a cold one. But Christ has been misunderstood by those who think of him as offering a consolation prize. He told men how to keep the fire living in the grate ; told them that the fire itself was of the same nature with the stars. He promised them a passion freed from its cage ; seeing in it not a danger to the soul but the soul itself, passionate for that which is not itself, the soul become all a lover and finding

everywhere the scent and beauty, the allurements, of that which it loves. He knew the error of those philosophers who see nothing between their own lonely selves and God in an infinite distance; for him man was not a lonely spirit on the earth, lonely in his private search for a far distant God. God is to be found and seen, not through an illimitable vacancy between Himself and the spirit of man, but in and through all things that stir man to love. He is to be seen in the light of a cottage window as well as in the sun or the stars.

Only those who know this escape from the dullness and routine of life. Blake has told us that Satan is the God of things that are not, 'the lost traveller's dream under the hill.' He is the God of the rainbow-end in the next field but one, in seeking whom men miss the true God in the meadow where they stand. And men always miss God, if all things are but fingerposts pointing the way to Him, to be used and valued only because they point the way. Christ tells us to value men and things for their own sake; we must have a passion for men if we are to have one for God. 'Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of these little ones ye have done it unto me.' It is not only of conduct that those words are true. If we are to understand Christianity, we must extend them and say—Inasmuch as ye have seen one of these little ones ye have seen me; and—Inasmuch as ye have understood one of these little ones ye have understood me. God is revealed to us in the known,

not hidden in the unknown ; and we have to find Him where we are.

All through the ages men have dreamed of seeing God face to face, as Semele saw Him. She was granted her wish ; but the sight of God face to face shrivelled her up. There is more truth in the story, perhaps, than was meant by it. Man is of such a nature that he cannot see God face to face. For us the Word must always be made flesh, made matter ; and we must look for the Word not disguised but revealed in matter, in the actual character and individuality of men and things. No man has ever seen God, like King Charles, hidden in an oak tree. To seek Him that way madness lies ; for, if you believe that God will reveal Himself to you directly because of some special merit or perceptions of your own, you are in danger of seeing a phantom created by your own egotism. If you are to see God in an oak tree, you must see the oak tree, see it not in any relation to your own wants and desires, but in all its own peculiar character and beauty. A Chinese artist has said that a tree in a picture should look as if it had been painted by a tree ; and the Chinese have been able to paint trees as we paint men, and to express a religious passion in their pictures of them, because they have learned to look at trees for their own sake and so to see God in them.

No man hath seen God at any time. It is strange how often the truest words in the New Testament are ignored, or their meaning missed. That saying

should warn us not to look back to the past for those who have seen God, nor to suppose that we shall find a peculiar and pure revelation of God in any words of the past. As God has been revealed, so He is revealed now ; and we can understand the words of those to whom He has been revealed only if He is revealed to us also. But because this is not understood either by those who believe in God or by those who do not, there is a division between them which grows always sharper. To both Christianity seems to belong to the past ; and the former despise it, the latter prize it, for that reason. The former trust in their intellects, the later in their emotions ; and by both a harmony of intellect and emotion is despaired of.

There is the failure of Christianity ; or rather the failure both of those who accept it and of those who do not. Neither attain to, or even hope for, a harmony of intellect and emotion. Hence the malaise, the sentimentality, and the futile cleverness of our time. For many of the best and ablest men there is a sharp discrepancy between their intellect and their emotions, between their values and their sense of truth. The Christian values are what make life worth living to them ; but these values seem to them inherited from the past and not confirmed in the present. They are romantic and pathetic, like a beautiful old building which we love but could not build now. And even the devout often see them so, though they will not confess it to themselves. For

them also the Christian values have lost their logic and are an isolated fact in a hostile universe. And God Himself is an isolated fact, of which they know only by hearsay and from the words of the prophets of old. They believe in Him, that He is in His heaven ; but they see this world despondently as a place in which Christian morals will not really work. We are told by Christ to behave in a certain way ; and we must do so because he tells us. But it is not business, and it is right because it is not business. By religion men are to be trained like dutiful performing dogs to perform strange, unnatural acts of piety, for which they will be rewarded with harp and crown.

So Christianity now is not enriched with the intelligence of the world ; and the intelligence of the world is not enriched with Christianity, because it does not try to understand Christianity, because it despairs of that harmony between values and truth which is the aim of the Christian life. And this lack of harmony betrays itself in all thought and art of modern Christianity ; especially in the art, where the betrayal is most complete because unconscious. In the thirteenth century there was a Christian conception of the universe, limited or false in many details, which was expressed in all thought and in all art. The great philosopher of that age was a Christian, and his aim was to apply the Christian faith to all thought, since for him it was a theory of the universe. And so also the aim of the art of that



age—an art richer, more spontaneous, and more highly organised, than any which we have seen since—was to express a Christian attitude towards the universe. And it did express that attitude in a peculiar beauty different from that of the pagan art of Greece. So, if then a philosopher or an artist wished to express himself as a Christian, he did not need to limit his intelligence or his passions, to be less adventurous, less single-minded, less concerned with the pure subject matter of his activity, because he was a Christian. His faith enriched rather than impoverished his mind. Compare, for instance, a French church of the thirteenth century with one of our modern churches. The builders of the thirteenth century were eager discoverers, both as engineers and as artists ; they exercised all their faculties, scientific and artistic, in their building. Christian art was for them not different from other art, not more timid, more limited, or more traditional ; it was simply art, and science as well, the natural expression of Christian faith, which was also thought and emotion.

But, for the modern church builder, his art is not a natural expression of anything. He must by means of a peculiar style, archaistic and acquired, insist on the fact that he is building a sacred building in the midst of a secular world. And the clergy, and the devout laity, are usually afraid of all adventure and spontaneous expression in the art of the church, lest it should remind them of secular art. It

must be labelled sacred by its style ; and, provided it has that label, no one asks whether there is any sense or passion in it. So this art is commonly provided by ecclesiastical tradesmen ; and it has the peculiar ugliness of all commercial articles that pretend to be works of art. Consider also the case of painting. Religious painting may be taken seriously as religion ; it is not taken seriously as art. The serious painting of our time is not Christian, nor is it even anti-Christian. You would not gather from it that there was such a thing as a religion in Europe. The religion of the great painter now is purely æsthetic ; if he calls it a religion, he uses the word metaphorically. He would not think of calling it Christian, nor does he recognise anything Christian in his passion for the beauty of the earth or the character of men, in his refusal to produce prettiness to please the mob, in his desire to forget himself in the expression of his values. And there is some excuse for him, since there are very few clergymen, or devout laymen, who would not be shocked by the spectacle of a good modern picture in a church. They would say it was secular if not blasphemous. They would be horrified by those works of Gauguin in which a religious emotion is consciously expressed in a religious subject.

Or, to turn to the art of literature, compare any modern hymn with the great religious poem of the fifteenth century, *Quia amore langueo*. In both there may be the same subject, the love of Christ

for mankind. But the modern hymn scarcely tries to be poetry. It is written in verse, because verse is the proper medium for hymns; and the writer seems to be paying compliments, to be doing something unnatural in the hope of acquiring merit by it. At least, if he does not, there is little chance that his hymn will be sung in any place of worship, where the English hymnal is not used. Nearly all our modern hymns are like our patriotic poetry in this, that their merit is in their intention rather than in their achievement. It is assumed that no one would write sacred verse because he wished to. Any one who does so is like a dog walking on its hind legs; the wonder is that he can do it at all. So no one expects it to be as good as secular poetry. 'Lead, kindly light,' is so much admired because it is almost as good as secular poetry. If it were secular poetry, we should never hear of it.

But *Quia amore langueo* is not merely as good as the secular poetry of its age. In a time of academic versifiers, it is beautiful natural folk song, as natural as any love poetry could be now. For it is love poetry; and in speaking of the love of Christ the poet was able to express his own passion and his uttermost values with all his natural poetic power. To him the love of Christ for man is really the chief force in the universe. It is not something that he forces himself to believe in from a sense of duty, any more than a lover forces himself to believe in his own love:

Long thou for love never so high,  
 My love is more than thine may be.  
 Thou weepest, thou gladdest, I sit thee by :  
 Yet wouldst thou once, love, look unto me !  
 Should I always feede thee  
 With children's meat ? Nay, love, not so.  
 I will prove thy love with adversity,  
*Quia amore langueo.*

That is music, not merely church music, but the sweetness of the heart, in which is the scent of spring flowers and the song of birds and the freshness of rain. All that the poet can feel in the beauty of the universe is set to music in it, because the love of Christ means all that beauty to him.

No one could write naturally in that manner now ; no one, perhaps, could think just those thoughts. But we have no natural manner of our own in which to express our Christianity ; and so we cannot express it so as to make others believe in it. If, for instance, I said that the love of Christ was to me the chief force in the universe, a man of science would smile at me or be angry with my vague pietism. My words would have no meaning for him, whether I expressed myself thus in prose or wrote a hymn ; and the orthodox would be pleased with them thoroughly because of their orthodoxy. It would be enough for them that I was saying what I ought to say, what we all ought to believe for the good of our souls, not what we do believe with all our passion and intel-

ligence, not what we express naturally with the best of our art and thought.

Art and science go on their way, not, perhaps, hostile to Christianity, but as if it did not exist. The man of science may think that Christian morals are the best, may see an almost miraculous rightness in them. Yet science now has strangely little curiosity about the manner in which this rightness was achieved. It is content to accept it and to see it as a merely moral rightness. But we are beginning to discover that morals are not a separate activity of the human mind. For us reality now consists in actual persons and things, and not in our comments upon them ; and we see that our division into moral, æsthetic, and intellectual is merely a comment of our own upon the mind of man. The reality is the mind itself in which these activities are not separate, in which that which happens is not merely moral or intellectual or æsthetic, but all three in one. And yet the moral discoveries of Christ remain for us merely moral, when they are not merely supernatural ; and we do not ask what is their connection with the nature of the universe. We are content to regard them merely as a rule of conduct, and so to cut them off from all our intellectual passions.

The Church of course would deny this for itself. It would maintain that it has a Christian conception of the nature of the universe. But it fails to impose this conception on the mass of men—it is a conception which even the devout adopt when they enter

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a church and leave behind them when they go out into the open air—because it is maintained with a limited intelligence, with the purpose of preserving Christianity unchanged, not of discovering the truth whatever it may be. The churches, when they think, are not taken seriously, because they think officially, because they seem to be tied by the leg to certain dogmas however long their tether may be. Their apologetics, when most liberal and intelligent, remain apologetics, having for their aim, not the discovery of truth, but the proof that there is still some vestige of truth in Christianity. What is needed is the discovery by the disinterested lay intelligence that there is more truth in it than has ever been dreamed of. But this can only be made by those who have no past dogmas to defend ; that is to say for whom it really is a discovery, made out of their own experience and expressed with their own passion.

It is the peculiar danger of all old and settled societies to be overcome by the tyranny of the past both in thought and in action, that tyranny which makes men disbelieve in the power of the human will. And we are threatened by it not only in the form of tradition, status, custom, but in the still more intimidating form of a morbid sense of causation. We tend more and more to believe that all things, men included, are what they have been made. Science, no less than superstition, can persuade us that we are born either to a meaningless

salvation or to an unjust damnation. We talk of heredity, of the born criminal, of races born to conquer or be conquered, as the Calvinist talked of predestination. And so we see ourselves more and more as essentially different from each other, separated like animals into distinct species, by nature herself forbidden that brotherhood which we still desire. We become Calvinists without believing in God, predestined to castes higher or lower, to races of rulers or slaves. The old sense of fate, with a new name, overcomes us, and we call it an unpleasant truth which sentimentalists try to hide from themselves. The rich and the poor cannot be brothers, they are born and made different ; the German, being a Teuton, cannot be a brother to the Latin, who is born decadent and therefore must be conquered. Criminals are a type, and must be treated as such. But those who know them as men, not as criminals, know that they are not a type, and do not humanely despair of them.

There still sounds the cry of the heroic lover of men—that no men are types or at the mercy of their past. But this cry is lonely, and has not the intellectual power of the world behind it, because the world dare not put it in practice. It remains only a cry ; and even those who utter it are not aware of its full truth. Often they utter it in old-fashioned pietistic language, which fails to convince mankind. They are good, we say, but they are not wise ; we wish that their words were true, but we know that the

truth is with those who despair scientifically and humanely ; for the man or the race that has failed will fail for evermore.

But whenever men consent to be slaves of the past, no matter what terms they may use to justify or conceal their slavery, then joy dies out of their society ; and their society itself dies slowly in weariness and mutual disgust. Despairing of the power to change itself, it suffers changes that seem to it a mere process of natural decay. It seems to us now, or did seem before the war, that we lived in a time of constant, busy, and futile reform, reform that was always imposed on us against our own wills. And with it all status grew steadily stronger. The proletariat, as we call them, became more and more fixedly of one class ; the rich, the free, the educated, of another. There was bargaining between the classes, but no brotherhood ; until they fought together for their country. Then suddenly they were all discovered to be men, because they had found a common cause for which they were ready to give their lives. The war has, at least, done this for us ; it has made us believe in the brotherhood of man and so in the human will ; and it has stirred us to an exercise of that will which we should have thought impossible before it. But what an irony it is, that only war can convince us of the brotherhood of man, and can stir us to a common exercise of will. Still, while we fight, our enemies are not of that brotherhood ; and we may be sure that, until the

brotherhood is universal for us, we shall not maintain our belief in it. For there is a logic in Christianity that cannot be violated ; either it is true of all men or it is not true at all ; and we must act on its truth if we are to believe it. We must utterly free ourselves, both in conduct and in thought, from our sense of our own superiority not merely to our own poor but to all men of all nations, if we are to attain to the freedom and joy of Christianity. ‘ Judge not that ye be not judged,’ says Christ ; and the saying means more than we know. It means that we must not judge other men by their past if we would free ourselves from our own past, if we would live in hope rather than in memory, if we would attain to the eternal life of the present.

So far, in the history of the world, a few individuals have dared to live this eternal life. Once or twice a nation has made a sudden rapturous advance towards it ; Athens after the Persian war ; France in the first joy of her Revolution. But always that advance has been checked by fear or pride ; never has a nation dared a conscious political acceptance of the Christian faith. Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, those are Christian words ; but the great Republic, which chose them with an inspiration so divine, did not know that they were Christian ; and soon her pride and her fear made them mere words to her, the battle-cry of men who fought for power. Now again all the democracies of the world are fighting for liberty, equality, and fraternity. But again they are

fighting against other men. Again these words sound only in war and we have not yet learned to make them sound in peace ; nor have we learned to think of them as anything but an aspiration of mankind to which the universe is indifferent. They express men's values rather than their convictions ; and they cannot come true until they are both politics and religion for us, until we believe in them and act on them, not only in a war where we are forced into fraternity by a common danger, but in peace and security. For we can always persuade ourselves that the brotherhood of war is merely the instinct of the pack attacked by another pack. And of this we shall persuade ourselves, if the other pack remains merely a hostile pack to us ; and then we shall fall back into the belief that in our own country also there is one pack of the rich and another of the poor, and an incessant war between them, only interrupted by occasional wars with a foreign pack. We must accept the Christian logic altogether if it is to come true for us. We must believe that it is true, and that salvation is to see its truth.

But is there any one who doubts that, if liberty, equality, and fraternity were a guide to the life of the nation no less than to the life of the individual soul, all arts and science would flourish as never before, and there would be wisdom and beauty in the very air men breathed ? No one doubts it or his own passion for these things. What we do doubt is the passion of other men. We think that we ourselves



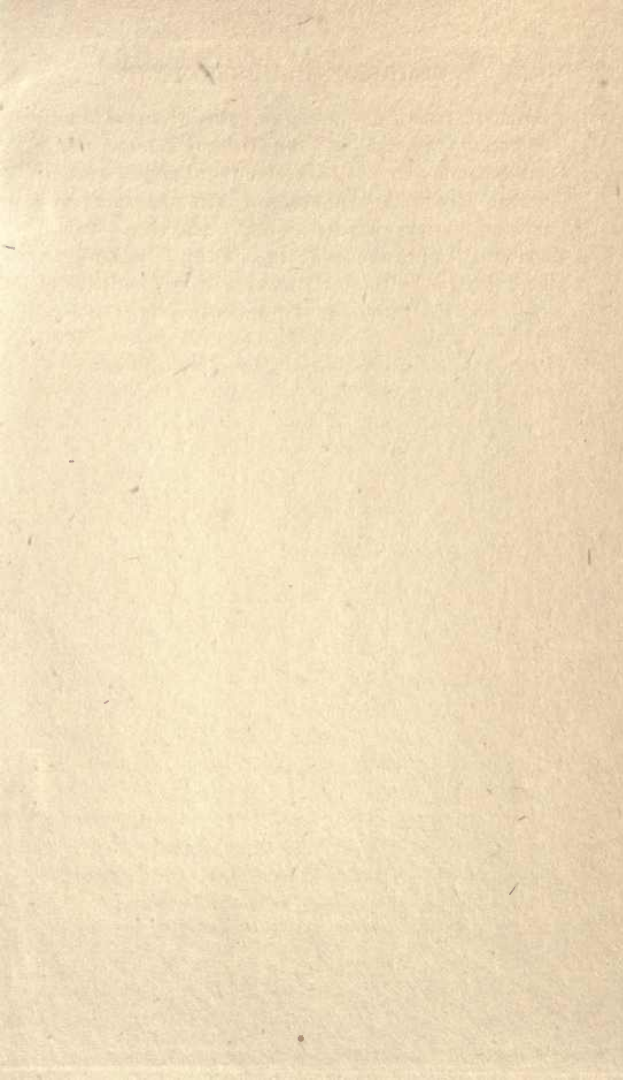
have attained to a unique disinterestedness, through education, through breeding, through race. The mass of men remain to us the mob, blind, dangerous at the mercy of their appetites. But no man is a member of the mob to himself; every one leaves himself out of all his hostile generalisations; and yet we all judge mankind by what we observe of them in our moods of fear and disgust, not by what we know of ourselves. In ourselves there is the will of Christ; but the common will is not the will of Christ. And, believing this, we do create a common will that is not the will of Christ, nor the will of any individual man; and then we believe that it is the will of individual men not ourselves. Always Christianity has failed to convince mankind of its truth because they will not believe that it is true of each other, because they will not think about their neighbours what they think about themselves. And, in all the arguing about it, men have never seen this, that they must act upon it in the mass, must act upon it politically, if they are to believe it true. There is the difficulty that has always baulked mankind in the past; but now at least we are becoming aware of it. We are no longer content with a Christian Church, practising its devotions apart from a secular State as if it were trying to ignore an unpleasant noise. We no longer believe that Christianity is designed to console the oppressed, and the oppressors.

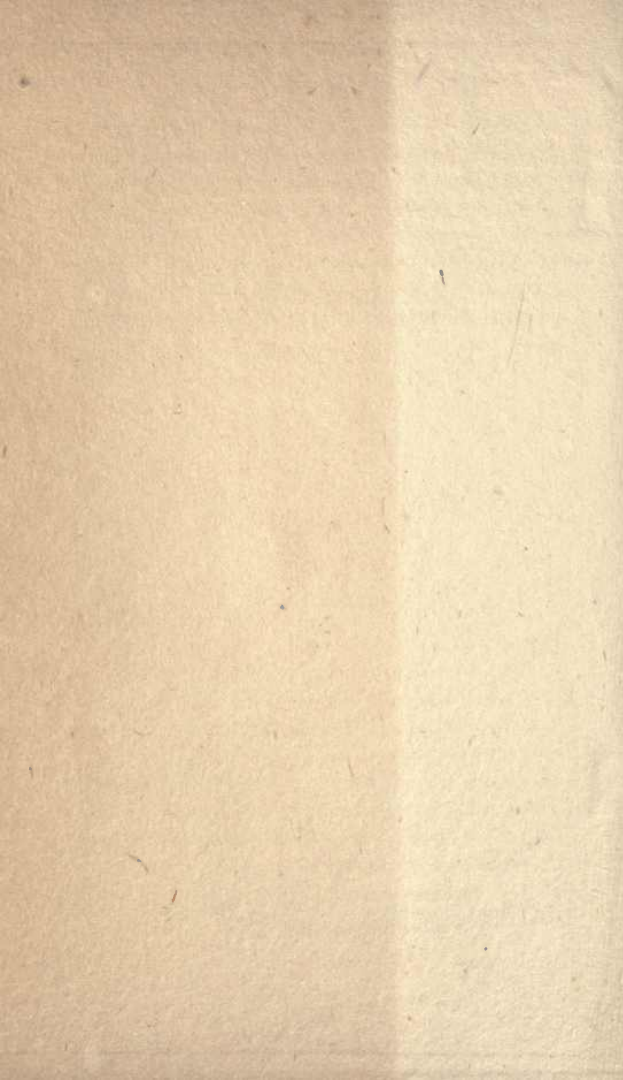
If it is to exist at all, it must exist in the common, and political, will that there be no oppressed or

oppressors. And that will is no will at all unless it is political. I may be determined, as an individual, to oppress no one. No doubt William Wilberforce was so determined to oppress no one ; but he found reasons why the State, which meant his own class, should oppress all the poor ; and the effect was just the same as if he himself had oppressed them. Indeed he himself did oppress them, for his own prosperity and status, through the State of which he was one of the governors. And the cause of his tyranny and self-deception was the belief that other men were not as he was, that they were too ignorant and selfish to profit by the freedom which he enjoyed. He would dare to act like a Christian privately ; he did not dare to let the State act like one. And so the Christianity of men like him has become a byword with the poor ; and even the rich no longer believe in it. It has failed utterly, failed even to be an opiate. But the Christianity of Christ remains undiscredited, because we have not dared yet to try it, where it must be tried if it is to be believed, in our politics. We have tried other things in our politics, and they have not succeeded, judged by any test. Let us, if we will, say that Christianity is the only way to succeed in the struggle for life. It may be that we must forget all its familiar language for a time and put it into a scientific jargon of our own. As I said before, there are many now who cannot believe in God unless they call Him by another name. But if, forgetting the very name of

Christianity, we do at last exercise a Christian will in politics, we shall find that the old familiar words are becoming true to us, true not only by revelation and in some unknown state of being, but here and now and in our own experience. And then we shall cease to dispute about the meaning of Christ's words, because we shall know, out of our own experience, that they are true and true in the same sense for all.

THE END







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